



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

SEARCH LIBRARIES



07607486 7

IS WORLDLY
GOODS
MARGARETTA TUTTLE

Section. American.

Alice H. Garrison.

Tuttle

HIS WORLDLY GOODS





THIS WORLDLY GOODS


By

MARGARETTA TUTTLE

WITH FRONTISPIECE IN COLOR BY

PAUL MEYLAN

CHICAGO
THE POLIS
BOOK COMPANY
PUBLISHERS





HIS WORLDLY GOODS

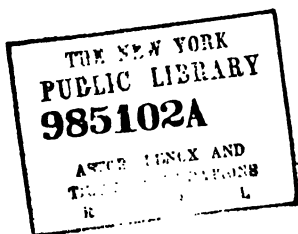
By
MARGARETTA TUTTLE

WITH FRONTISPIECE IN COLOR BY
PAUL MEYLAN

INDIANAPOLIS
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

561251

COPYRIGHT 1912
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY



PRESS OF
BRAUNWORTH & CO.
BOOKBINDERS AND PRINTERS
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

TO
MY FATHER
GEORGE PERKINS

WYLLIAMS

HIS WORLDLY GOODS

HIS WORLDLY GOODS

CHAPTER I

"And we see
'Twas Idleness we took for Fate,
That bound light bonds on you and me."

THE great Carson door within the vestibule at the head of the broad stone steps swung slowly open. For a moment a woman stood in the doorway, a slim and exquisite figure, gray-blue against the rich background of a hall where subdued light fell on carved wood and glowing tapestries. Then the door closed and the woman came out on the steps and paused, with a swift glance at the motor before her door and at the man driving it, who sprang from the car and came toward her.

She put back a heavy blue veil from her face, as the man paused before her and held out his hand.

"Nadine — good morning," he said quietly.

She put one hand in his, looked at him a moment, and then smiled slowly, the long sweet corners of her gray-blue eyes narrowing as she smiled, until the man involuntarily tightened his hold on her hand.

She let him hold it the briefest of moments, then she lifted her other hand, and drew the veil down over her face. The effect of suddenly blotting out the vivid eyes and the lips with their slow silent smiling was startling. The man dropped her hand at once.

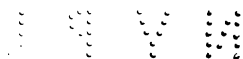
"It is good of you to go, Nadine; it is a glorious morning. Do you mind if I stop to see Thorne a moment about a meeting of the vestry to-night where I have to speak? I would have seen him on the way here but I was afraid I should be late. It is quite important or I should not ask you to wait while I go in. It won't take long."

He put her into the seat beside him as he made his request and the car moved forward.

"I shall not mind." Her voice was low and soft, the voice of the woman assured of herself; but it held a curious mocking quality as she finished her sentence. "You may even ask Mr. Thorne to go with us if you like, Percy."

The man suddenly straightened his shoulders with a quick glance at her. If he must speak to Thorne, he might ask him to come with them! That was Nadine. He bridled a little.

"Surely," he said, "if you wish, I will ask him. There is the archdeacon across the street, evidently also going to the parish house. Shall I ask him to go with us too?"



She laughed softly, making him no answer, and he drove the car to the curb and got out, leaving her apparently intent on the figure of the archdeacon, who had stopped quite still on the other side of the street and was staring at Percy Jeffrey as he disappeared in the parish house where Thorne lived.

Presently the archdeacon brought his eyes back to Jeffrey's automobile, and this being the third time in the last fortnight that he had seen Jeffrey with Mrs. Carson, the archdeacon gave the veiled figure in the machine an attention that was tinged with curiosity. If the attention was observed behind the blank expanse of heavy veil that by no means shrouded her identity to one who knew her, Mrs. Carson gave no indication of it.

The archdeacon was not permitted even the briefest of salutations, and he passed into the parish house justly annoyed. The situation of a young woman with immense wealth at her disposal, as the result of the confinement of her husband in a hospital for the wealthy insane, seemed to the archdeacon a more delicate one than it evidently did to Mrs. Carson, whose complaisances never appeared to extend in the expected direction.

The archdeacon still recalled with discomfort his last interview with her. She had, it is true, given him without demur the check he had asked for, and she

had, with interest he would not have suspected of her, inquired minutely into the charities he represented. But when, with some effort, he had moved the conversation to more personal topics, he had found himself suddenly enmeshed in comment that might mean any one of a dozen things, and that a man could not answer with discrimination, or even with speed. The archdeacon could endure the first part of her sentences but he never knew just where their finish was going to leave him.

This time Mrs. Carson had concluded their interview with the solemn assurance that it would have been a great waste if he had missed taking orders, for nature had evidently designed him to adorn a niche of the episcopate. After two weeks he was still musing over that word adorn. He wondered if she talked that way to Jeffrey.

The archdeacon knew Jeffrey only as he encountered him in the home of Jeffrey's sister, Mrs. Morris, where, since her widowhood, Jeffrey lived. But he knew Mrs. Morris rather well; she was included in many of his plans, spiritual and temporal; and as she had no reason to withhold her opinions from him, the archdeacon also knew Mrs. Morris' concern over her brother's attendance on Mrs. Carson.

When he opened the door into the rector's study, the archdeacon found Jeffrey about to leave, and as they

stood a moment together, the archdeacon took in the young man's blond fairness of skin and hair with a new appreciation of his resemblance to his sister.

"How is Mrs. Morris?" asked the archdeacon.

"She is on the edge of neurasthenia over the rector. She does not know whether to spend her energy combating his free-seat idea or to report him to the bishop for the heresy of his last sermon. I am at present delivering her remonstrances." He turned to the rector. "It is not the only penalty I pay for having gone through college with you, Rex. In the morning I bring you disapproval from my family for what at night I am going to help you put through."

The rector laughed. "Somewhat contentious for a vestryman, I will admit."

The archdeacon stared. "Indeed! When were you elected to the vestry?" he asked.

For Jeffrey added to the shrewd management of a growing business, attention to clubs and yachts, and diversions that usually preclude service in what seemed to the archdeacon more serious matters.

"Ask Thorne to tell you about it," said Jeffrey, nodding at the rector. "It is a good story, and I have to go. I can not persuade you to come with us, Rex?"

"You are persuasive enough, but I have work to do."

"That sounds too general to be convincing."

"Well, then, I have to call on three old ladies, two of whom have a grievance."

"You should let your parish visitor call on all elderly women with a grievance. It is the duty of all unmarried clergymen who have parish visitors. The archdeacon, being a bachelor, agrees with me, I know."

The archdeacon declining to commit himself, Jeffrey made ready to depart.

"I will be here to-night at eight, Rex," he said. "Good-by, Archdeacon." He closed the door of the study and ran lightly down the steps.

In a moment, the automobile with the blue-veiled figure in it had turned the corner of the street.

"Such support," said the archdeacon, with dignity, "can not possibly help you."

The rector gave the archdeacon a level glance. "A little sense of humor might, don't you think?" he said.

But the archdeacon, not having a delicate sense of proportion, knew nothing of the helpfulness of humor; moreover, religion was a serious thing, and its servant could not afford to be on intimate terms with the handmaid of frivolity. He worded this thought with what delicacy he could, considering that it bore reproof, but receiving no reply, he launched immediately into the matter that had brought him there—the urging of discretion on this young man who had undertaken, somewhat recently, one of the most diffi-

cult of charges, a rich city parish, touching on one hand the most tragic need, and on the other bored affluence.

"You state the conservative side of the matter fairly," was all the rector seemed to find it necessary to reply.

The archdeacon confronted with a moment's bewilderment the difficulty of making the issue personal.

"Now, there is Mrs. Morris," he said, at length. "Her brother is one of your oldest friends, and she is one of the wealthiest women in your congregation. Just a little tact would suffice there."

"The abandonment of every one of my own purposes would not suffice," said Thorne thoughtfully. "It would require the adoption of all her purposes."

The archdeacon had a feeling that perhaps he had made the issue a trifle too personal, but he had never consciously abandoned a purpose because it had become difficult for him.

"It distresses me to hear the judgment of a man holding your position so often called in question," he said.

"In much wisdom is much grief," quoted the rector, with entire gravity.

The archdeacon considered this reply, and found it enigmatic. Then, observing that Thorne had swung around in his desk chair and picked up a pile of un-

answered letters, the archdeacon rose with a sigh over the infrequent use by these young enthusiasts of the better part of valor. There were times when Thorne gave him the same discomfort he found with Mrs. Carson—one could not be sure how either of them would take things.

As the door of his study closed, the rector's thoughts also turned to Mrs. Carson. Five years before Wrexford Thorne had been called to his present parish, the degenerate heir to the immense Carson fortune had married the dowerless daughter of one of the oldest families in the country. Her world said she had earned her reward when, a few months after the wedding, her husband's father died, and left his son to spend his millions undisturbed.

The young man succeeded in disbursing about one-third of them, but during the process he developed acute mania from what had been eccentric folly. Nobody had ever accused him of the possession of brains. Nobody was surprised when, two years after his marriage, his wife had him confined, by order of the court, in a private sanatorium for the hopelessly insane, and his estate put into the hands of trustees competent to manage it.

Nor was there much surprise exhibited when Mrs. Carson's appealing beauty, and the recklessness she hid under a youthful and ingenuous exterior, kept her

own city, and several others, in food for gossip that sometimes approached scandal. For several years rumor was busy with the rapid succession of men on whom Mrs. Carson smiled. For one year — the year Thorne had been there to hear it — rumor had fixed on one man, and persistently connected Mrs. Carson's name with Percy Jeffrey's.

Mrs. Carson nominally belonged to Thorne's church, and even occasionally listened to a service. On one of these occasions he had asked his congregation for money help in his parish-house work, and she had sent him a check that made all other contributions unnecessary. It was a curious arrangement that put in such careless hands so great a power.

And here Thorne paused. He had spoken with Mrs. Carson only three or four times, and each time he had borne away with him an impression of swift and vivid thinking, of eyes that saw below surfaces, of a mind that reached out to the understanding of encountered personality even while withdrawing itself from observation.

Outside his door he heard the voices of the Woman's Auxiliary disbanding after the morning's work. There was the sound of many footsteps on the stairway, and then quiet — a quiet broken by a firm knock at his door.

"Come in," said the rector.

It was Mrs. Morris, her corn-colored hair glowing in carefully preserved tints under a gray motor veil, her excellently-controlled figure covered by a gray motor coat that hid its defects of slight heaviness while lending grace to its outlines.

Thorne rose. Almost subconsciously his lips closed more tightly.

"Is my brother here, Mr. Thorne?" she asked.

"He left some little time ago, Mrs. Morris."

"How provoking! Did he say where he was going? I want to use the automobile."

The rector appeared to hesitate over his answer, and the lady, to whom direct questions were in no way embarrassing, drew an instant conclusion and voiced it in question form. "You don't happen to know"—she had the grace to pause a moment—"if he took Mrs. Carson with him in the machine?"

The rector hesitated no longer. "He was here only for a few minutes, Mrs. Morris, about the vestry meeting to-night."

Mrs. Morris let this non-committal information sink in a moment, then she sat down in the chair that the archdeacon had lately left.

"May I sit down a minute and talk to you about Percy?" she said.

His permission having been taken for granted be-

fore the request, Thorne found no need for answer. He merely seated himself again at his desk, and gave the lady his attention.

"You are one of my brother's best friends, Mr. Thorne, or I should not intrude this on your attention, but I am really much worried over his infatuation for this woman."

She paused, evidently waiting for his reply. Thorne made it brief.

"Would you call it that?" he asked.

"That or worse." Mrs. Morris lifted a chin that massage was keeping firm in outline, and the gesture brought out certain hard lines in her face over which the rector pondered.

"Scarcely worse," he said. "Percy is not naturally treacherous. He is clean in mind and thought."

"Ah, but she is treacherous, and she does not care in the least about things most women are guided by. Mr. Thorne, will you speak to Percy? I have tried to, but he will not let me mention the subject."

"I am afraid my speaking to him would be equally useless," said Thorne. "Men will not talk of these things; it is the woman in it that holds them silent. Percy would consider it an intrusion into his affairs that not even an old friendship would excuse. Is there not some better way?"

The woman looked at him in unresourceful surprise.

"Has there been no girl for whom Percy has cared?" Thorne asked.

Mrs. Morris considered. "Last year"—she hesitated—"it was Laura Whitney. But—she would not do!"

"Would not do! I do not understand you. I do not know a finer girl. Surely she is all you could ask for Percy, Mrs. Morris!"

Mrs. Morris maintained a rare silence, and the rector, accustomed to reading faces, inquired:

"Did anything come between them?"

"I might as well tell you, I suppose," sighed Mrs. Morris. "I disapproved of the thing because she was a working woman. I know her family is good, and her own education passable, but really—a stenographer—and for Percy!"

"But I understand," said Thorne gently, "that she was left fatherless and penniless, and had to take whatever offered. She is not only excellently bred, but very able."

Mrs. Morris shrugged her shoulders. "Of course," she said, "I would have infinitely preferred Miss Whitney to Nadine Carson had I known Nadine would catch him on the rebound. But, you see, I did not know then."

Thorne mused on these comments with their faint

quality of underbreeding. Mrs. Morris, reflecting that she was safely talking to her rector, continued.

"I have sometimes thought that if the archdeacon and I had not interfered, Percy would have married Miss Whitney. She is good-looking."

"The archdeacon!"

"Well, perhaps I ought not to speak of it, but the archdeacon saw my predicament with regard to Miss Whitney. We have been pretty good friends for a long time, the archdeacon and I. It is his idea that any attachment can be broken up by judicious ridicule."

The rector endeavored to betray no surprise.

"He told me of the success he had had in one case by saying every time the young man spoke of the young woman: 'She would be good-looking if she were not so fat.' So — er — we — we tried his scheme."

She waited for a reply, but as there seemed none forthcoming, she concluded:

"But, you see, you can not work the same scheme on a man twice. And so, now that Mrs. Carson is involved, we are quite powerless."

In the face of the blank silence that followed on her confidences, Mrs. Morris had her first feeling of discomfort. Emphatically she did not approve of a man so careful of wasting his words. 'As the silence continued she rose.

"You think there is nothing that you can do?" she asked stiffly.

The rector turned to her a face carefully blank.

"I will see if there is anything to be done, Mrs. Morris," he said, and opened the door for her.

When she had gone, he crossed the floor to the window and stared out at the spring sunshine, but it was very certainly not the sunshine that he saw. He saw instead the fine patient face of the girl Mrs. Morris had spoken of so slightly; he thought of its slow whitening under the unaccustomed hardship of her business life, of the unselfishness with which she gave her scant spare time to the church-work that had been an occupation in the idler days of her father's lifetime. That very night she would come to the church to train a class of working women in shirt-waist making, and toil with them over their unaccustomed stitches, and talk with them in her slow soft voice—he had watched her many times.

It seemed incredible that a man could turn from this face, where was written character and loyalty, to that other; and Thorne's mind caught up the image of Nadine Carson. It was a haunting face, subtle in its reserves, clever in what it expressed. The eyes, blue and bored, looked out from under a cloud of nut-brown hair on a world holding no illusions, yet the mouth and chin were soft and girlish.

Thorne acknowledged the quality of fascination such a face might exert on a man, yet the other face was not one to be driven from the mind of a man so easily; not even assisted by "judicious ridicule". There must have been something else.

Thorne came to a sudden decision.

"If there is any speaking to be done," he said, "it shall be to Mrs. Carson. It may interest her to try a new rôle — that of self-sacrifice."

CHAPTER II

"Ride with an idle whip, ride with an unused heel,
But know the way when comes the day
Of the need of the rowelled steel."

"**I** MET the archdeacon in Thorne's office," said Jeffrey to Mrs. Carson as they drove out into the country in the golden noon sunlight.

"You know," Mrs. Carson murmured, raising her long veil now that there were no more curious eyes about her, "I have never liked the archdeacon very much, nor your sister, either, for that matter."

Jeffrey watched her wind her veil about the brim of her hat, and then he answered.

"I suppose that everybody is connecting their names as you do. I can not help but wonder"—and Jeffrey laughed—"what will happen if they ever get to know each other really well."

"Why?" asked Mrs. Carson, and it was not often that she found it necessary to employ this exacting little monosyllable.

"Selina thinks that the archdeacon is intellectual," said Jeffrey. "She takes his long silences for communion with his own mental depths, and his inadequate

speech seems to her the hesitancy of true spirituality. I suppose it is his impressive manner. Many women can not go beyond a manner. But if she ever does — well, she is a bit spiteful, and he will probably render payment.

“The archdeacon thinks Selina is generous with her money, which she is not, being her kind of woman.” And Jeffrey laughed at the woman beside him, whose generosity was well-known. “He believes she is immersed in church-work for the good she can do. He will learn better when she has transferred her desire-to-prevail, from the church management Thorne has already deprived her of, to himself. You see, one might easily wonder what will happen.”

“If one were as reflective as you seem to be on the matter,” said Mrs. Carson.

But Jeffrey did not hear her. He was thinking of the time the archdeacon had come to him with a request that he should not make Miss Whitney conspicuous by his attentions; that a wealthy man’s following of a working woman would be well construed by neither his world nor hers. On close and indignant questioning, the archdeacon had admitted that he spoke in behalf of the lady most concerned in the matter.

Jeffrey had known Miss Whitney’s father, and had felt a very real sympathy for the misfortunes that had overtaken the daughter. He had watched her, fading

under the unaccustomed confinement and strain of her new work, with distress. Things had not gone far with them but they bade fair to do so, until this interview with the archdeacon put a sudden end to the situation.

Mrs. Carson turned her blue eyes on the somber face beside her.

"Percy," she said, "I've many things for you to be stricken into silence over that are more important than the archdeacon."

Jeffrey considered her a moment.

"How did you find out that you did not like him?" he asked with sudden suspicion. "Surely you do not know him well!"

She laughed — a soft little ripple of notes that, with the curves of the childlike mouth, was infinitely seductive.

"What a man's question!" she said. "He came to call on me once, and with much care I extracted the story of his life. A vain man is any woman's game. Sometime when I wish to plague your sister he shall be permitted to call again."

Jeffrey pondered over the multiplicity of conquests on which this assurance was built, and felt quite certain that the archdeacon probably would call again if permitted, but he said:

"Are you sure he would come?"

Mrs. Carson pulled the pins from her hat and laid it in her lap. The wind ruffled her cloud of brown hair into a hundred curling tendrils, and the sun burnished it to bronze. It gave her face an uncertain elfin quality, vastly attractive.

"Well, you see," she made answer, "I could always promise him a check for home missions — if he would come and get it."

"Ah!" said Jeffrey. "There is a rather deadly knowledge behind your almost overwhelming ingenuousness."

Mrs. Carson made him no answer, and Jeffrey turned his car into the coast road.

"I thought," he said, "since you left the selection of a place to lunch entirely to me, that it would be pleasant to drive to Belle Terre Club. There will be nobody at the club so early in the season, and after lunch we can have a game of golf, if you like. We can go home any time you wish."

"Did I not hear you say that you were making a speech to-night at your vestry meeting?"

"I am, but I do not have to be there until eight o'clock. I can take you home on my way to the church."

It was twilight before they left the club. As Jeffrey drove silently over the level Long Island roads, he found himself wondering if a whole day in the

open was not one of the severe tests of a woman's companionability. He looked at Nadine's delicately-flushed face and admitted that, resourceful as he knew her to be, he had not believed she would bear this especial test as well as she had. Removed from the silent and competent service that usually surrounded her like a protecting cloak, she had been as simple and as charming as some gay child playing truant.

A man may keep his words and deeds within the strict limit of the conventional during an hour, or even two or three hours, with a fascinating woman; but at the end of a whole day with her — and of such a day as these two had spent alone at a deserted club, lunching, golfing, driving recklessly along deserted roads — the most conventional man is apt to depart from the paths of discretion.

Jeffrey spent the return to the city in the making of reckless plans — plans that might perhaps have been carried out but that, at the crossing of a shabby little street a half-square from the church where Jeffrey was due in a few minutes, the force that bends the maddest plan to its own purposes intervened.

Jeffrey, now hurrying to leave Mrs. Carson at home and keep his appointment with Thorne, saw neither the shabby street nor the swift attempt of a slight figure to elude his machine. There was a stifled cry,

and the figure that had almost escaped fell to the ground.

"You've run over something," gasped Mrs. Carson as Jeffrey brought his machine to an abrupt halt.

In a moment Jeffrey had the girl he found lying in the street in his arms. Nadine had sprung to the ground.

"Hurry," said Jeffrey, "before the crowd comes. Go into the parish house. The vestrymen are all there, and Doctor Lawrence among them. Tell him, while I carry in the girl."

As he entered the doorway with his burden, the doctor and Thorne met him. Mrs. Carson stood mute, watching Jeffrey's whitening face.

"It is Miss Whitney," said Thorne.

They laid her on a couch in the library while the doctor examined her.

"She is unconscious from the fall," he said at length, "but her head is only bruised, I think. Her ankle looks very much as if it were broken. We had better get her home, and then I can be sure. It is not fatal," he reassured the young man; "not even serious if she is well cared for."

"She shall be cared for," said Jeffrey quietly. "I will take her to my own home. She would get no proper care in the boarding-house where she lives.

Will you come with us, Doctor? And will you telephone my sister we are coming, Rex?"

"Yes, I will," said Wrexford Thorne.

"Telephone for a trained nurse, too, Mr. Thorne," said the doctor. "I will give you the address. She should come at once. Is it far to your house, Jeffrey?"

"Five squares," said Percy. "We can take it slowly in the automobile." Then his eye fell on Mrs. Carson. "I will ask Rex to take you home, Nadine," he said, with forgetful use of her first name. "Good night."

Nadine heard Thorne announcing Percy's impending arrival to Mrs. Morris over the telephone. She watched them carry Miss Whitney to the automobile and waited until it had turned the corner of the street. Then she slipped quietly out of the parish house to walk the few squares between the church and her own house alone. She had no especial wish to encounter the rector. But he caught up with her before she had gone half the distance, and arriving at her door, asked if he might come in a few minutes.

"I know you are tired, and perhaps upset by this accident, yet I want to speak to you a moment, and I will not stay long."

She assented with a sudden direct look that gave him a glimpse of one phase of her attractiveness to

men, so full it was of understanding. She led the way into a library that was a marvelous place of shaded lights and glowing pictures. Rare old editions companioned crisp new books. Poetry and war and medicine beckoned from shelf and table. England, from its first written word to its last psychological novel, importuned one to stop and read. France flaunted its novels beside its science; Germany its philosophy. Magazines ranged their gay covers at one's elbow; and close to a broad couch a bowl of red roses caught the rose colors of rug, and wall, and mahogany into a vivid accented point. Scarlet, and gold, and ivory, and dull blue, books by the hundreds lined the walls, and brooding over their promise there ran the length of the hearth a deep-toned painting of Lauren's *Lost Illusions*.

The man took it all in as part of the atmosphere that surrounded the woman who had created it, and the artist in him paid instant homage to the broad and sumptuous culture that it signified. Mrs. Carson stood looking at him, apparently so simply, yet her first words showed the perception behind the low tones.

"You want to talk to me about — Miss Whitney, do you not? Won't you sit down?"

Thorne had not meant to talk to her of Miss Whitney, yet as he looked at her, where she sat under one

of the shaded lights, the delicate tired face seemed to have a promise of spiritual depth he had not believed possible; and he suddenly found himself unable to speak of Jeffrey — unless she should permit it. She had, after all, given him the only way to approach what he wanted to say, that could be endured by either of them. He found himself telling her the story of Laura Whitney's narrowed living, with its economies and its sacrifices, as one would lay an appeal before a benign power. He spoke to the woman of unlimited means hunting for avenues of usefulness.

And Nadine watched him thoughtfully, probing into character, and, even as it was given her to do, gaging personality; then she said.

“But she is beautiful. She is *das ewig weibliche* itself — the woman needing a home and children for fulfilment. Is not that the solution?”

Thorne paused, almost disconcerted by her accurate interpretation of his thought. Briefly he found words for the relation of Laura Whitney's interrupted romance, though he made no mention of any other name. When he finished, Mrs. Carson sat quietly considering his story. She had that rarest of gifts — the ability to use silence with entire comprehension of its effect.

The rector waited, and even as he did so, she

gravely passed over his story with no comment at all, and went directly to the heart of the matter.

"And you hope that I will follow the lead this accident has given and eliminate myself utterly — to — shall we say — to give interrupted romance another chance?"

"It would be kind," said Thorne. "You have so much."

The woman looked about her, and the ennui deepened in her face until its outlines visibly sharpened. All the tragedy of womanhood surfeited with the things the world runs mad to win, and utterly denied the one thing that glorifies living for such a woman, lay in the delicate tired face — all the folly of gaining the whole world at the price of soul-growth, shadowed the blue eyes.

"I have so much! I have a wonderful mess of pottage; yes, and there is none of it that can compare to this girl's birthright. I have nothing — nothing in all my life of gold and glitter that can pay me for what you ask me to give up to this girl."

"And what is it to give up," said the rector gently, "not even love!"

"Not even love!" Nadine echoed. "Would that also be little to give up if this thing you call right were in the way?"

“No love would be easy to give up; yet for you, yes, and for every clear-eyed man and woman in the world, even love must be given up if it is right to do so. Not only for the right's sake — but for the love's sake. Wrong sometimes kills love slowly, yet ultimately it is bound to kill it. This man is young, and the world is not full of such women as you. It may be that to-day he gives you one of the many forms of love. Yet you know what this means for you and for him. You are no woman to shut your eyes and say to ultimate catastrophe: ‘I did not know.’ You know the man has honor — a little untried, but, in its way, adequate. It might perhaps go down before you; it is possible that you represent just that rare combination of allurements and intellect most tempting to such a man; but if it did —”

She interrupted. “These things I know,” she said. “You need not describe them to me. There is little loyalty among men to the woman they sacrifice. It comes at length, all of it, to grudging attention—and veiled disrespect. It may even be that real love will sacrifice itself, and not the woman who inspires it, and that if one becomes the woman sacrificed, one can believe that one is not the woman loved. Yet, so do we women need love that we are ready to cheat ourselves with its husks if we may have nothing more.”

"And the man," said the rector. "Have you thought of his needs?"

A ghost of a smile lightened her somber eyes. "Do you think, even eliminating love, that I have nothing for the enrichment of a man's life? It is because of the complexity of his needs that he comes to me."

"Yet he comes to you surreptitiously, hiding your place in his life, claiming the stimulation of friendship with you against his better judgment. How long does a real man endure the deceit such needs involve? Only a little while and then one of two things happens—he leaves it behind him or he deteriorates so that if the woman be such a woman as you are, she can neither endure him nor the alloyed love he has to offer. Will you see this thing happen to this man? Or will you—now—when you can be the one to renew his life and that of a young girl—will you make of this influence you have something helpful and gracious?"

A long silence fell over the rosy book-strewn room. The woman stared unseeingly at the brooding *Lost Illusions* on the wall before her. The man waited. Presently she flung out her hand.

"I think you know my answer," she said. "There could be but one."

Thorne rose.

"Yes," he said. "But because he is my friend, I

thank you. Will you some day ask some service of me?"

"Perhaps," she said. "Good night."

When he had gone she still sat staring at the picture over the hearth; sat until the shadow of loneliness deepened in all the lines of her subtle clever face, and spread to the figure almost huddled in the big chair. The meaning of friendship — the vision of what love might be — the upbuilding strength of the ever-present struggle came close to her, importuning her for recognition. But she closed her eyes — to see these things clearly meant the remaking of her life, and she was not ready.

She rose with a petulant little gesture that suggested possible histrionic ability, and moved to her desk. Her pen poised over her paper a moment while she measured probable outcomes, and then it traced a formal little note to the archdeacon concerning the Children's Hospital, that closed with the proffer of a check.

CHAPTER III

"The shadow of the waste places."

CARLETON THORNE was too busy a specialist to be much interested in weddings, but both he and his brother, the rector, had been in college with Jeffrey and having begged off from being usher at Jeffrey's wedding, it was only seemly that he should present himself at the church for the noon ceremony. He waited for the guests to go, and then went into the vestry-room to speak to his brother.

"Pretty bride," said Carleton Thorne. "Is it the Miss Whitney Jeff ran over with his automobile?"

"Yes," said the rector, laying his white stole on the table.

"Well, I thought Jeff was far too busy getting himself talked about attending Mrs. Carson to be thinking of marriage; but, of course, it is not every day that a man runs over a girl like Miss Whitney."

"Oh, nonsense," said the rector. "He has been interested in Miss Whitney a long time."

His brother laughed.

"Yes, but he has also been interested in Mrs. Car-

son a long time, has he not? Another case, I suppose, of an attractive woman who can not marry a man preparing him for marriage with the first girl he meets who comes anywhere near the mark the other woman has set."

Wrexford Thorne slipped out of his cassock.

"Who gave you such insight?" he said shortly.

His brother shot him a quick look.

"Specializing on nerves gives a man nearly as much chance at such insight as specializing on souls. As Mrs. Carson is your parishioner, and as I do not know her at all, I conclude it is soul with her and not nerves."

"You also evidently conclude that you are the only nerve specialist in New York. Mrs. Carson would be amused, I am sure, over being called anybody's parishioner. Have you ever met her?"

"No — but —" Carleton Thorne chuckled. "I was gathered up by Jeff's sister, Mrs. Morris, coming to the church this morning. My machine was not quite ready. On our way we passed Mrs. Morris' friend, the archdeacon. The lady had just been breathing congratulations, apropos of the wedding, that there had been nothing at all in the talk about her brother and Mrs. Carson — that is really what reminded me of the talk — when her eye lit on her erstwhile admirer. She finished her sentence as only a woman

can, with the hope that somebody would rescue the archdeacon from Mrs. Carson's snares. I said to myself that Colin Carson's wife was doubtless attractive to many different types of men, if in one sentence I was to hear of Jeff's escape and the archdeacon's danger; but to the bereft lady at my side I said that I should think she was quite the proper one to attend to the archdeacon's rescue."

The rector's somewhat grave gray eyes lightened with what might almost be called laughter.

"Carl," he said, "the community of even as large a parish as this is the most fertile place imaginable for the growth of gossip, but I have never before known you to be affected by it."

Carleton Thorne gave another chuckle.

"Your ministerial manner grows on you, Rex," he said. "You need an adventure or two in which you will have a chance to be a real man and not a choice figurehead, or you'll forget how to do everything but preach."

"In your way," said the rector, now ready for the street, "you are almost as much inclined to preach as I am. Did you come for anything especial?"

"To tell you the truth — which, of course, I should have done at once — I was trying my hand at the handle of the pump. But you are not to be worked or else the well is dry. I have received a summons to go

out to the Port Madison Sanatorium to deliver expert opinion on the condition of Colin Carson's remnants of mind, and I can not communicate with Mrs. Carson."

"Then you were not summoned by Mrs. Carson?"

"No, it was Harding who asked me to go—the lawyer who manages the estate. The doctor at the sanatorium also telephoned me. They are expecting me at two, and I am going out from here. I told Harding that an hour's ride to Long Island out by automobile and another back, with possibly an hour at the sanatorium, would run up a sizable bill, and he answered that he would be responsible for the bill; that Carson had shown improvement lately, and they wanted expert opinion from a physician who was not an alienist only. I told him that I would go, and then I tried to reach Mrs. Carson, but she could not be located—which seems a bit odd to me."

Wrexford Thorne thought it by no means odd that Mrs. Carson was not to be communicated with on Jeffrey's wedding-day, but he did not say so. Instead, he asked.

"But the man is a paranœac, is he not? No improvement is possible?"

"I do not know what he is. I was not one of the doctors who had him put in the sanatorium. I recall that when Mrs. Carson married him he was merely an eccentric millionaire, and generally in the papers,

doing some fool thing. He must have led her a joyful life! You know nothing, then, of Mrs. Carson, or how to reach her?"

"Not a thing save her address. These women of immense wealth are hedged in as royalty is. If they do not wish to be intruded on it can not be done."

"Well, I've done all I can. It is really her own affair. Has she brains enough to manage her own affairs?"

Wrexford Thorne considered his brother a moment.

"She is abnormally clever," he said. "So clever that not many men seem to find it out."

"Do you suppose, considering the many different types of men fortunately blind to her cleverness, that she wants Carson let loose?"

"I have not the least idea," said the rector, "what she wants."

He paused, and for the hundredth time there returned to him the memory of a book-lined room of rose and gold; a rich background for a woman's face — a face subtle in its reserves, seductive in its appeal, with dark-ringed Celtic eyes and bright bronze hair, and over all the veil of an ineradicable fatigue. And with equal clearness there returned to him her voice as she had answered his appeal to her — the voice, subtle in its reserves, like the face, and inexpressibly tired.

Wrexford Thorne found himself wondering, too, what she wanted — out of her life, out of her world of privilege and power, what did she want? Then he heard his brother speaking again.

“I would suppose that she preferred to keep her husband where he is. Perhaps that is why Harding is acting without her.”

They left the vestry and went out on the street. The doctor's machine had been brought to the door after the departure of the wedding carriages. He dismissed the garage man and took the wheel.

“I would not trust Harding with my affairs,” said the rector, “but that is entirely a personal prejudice on my part. I think you may be sure, however, that no matter what Mrs. Carson's preferences are in the matter, she would consult her husband's best interests.”

“I would be surer if it were not for Jeffrey escaped, and the archdeacon endangered, of which I heard this morning,” said the doctor, laughing. “Good-by.”

The rector stood in thought until the motor rounded the corner on its way to the Long Island ferry.

Earlier that same day, the Belle Terre Club, a mile out of Port Madison, preparing for its summer guests, and ready to slip out of its denim coverings and curtain its long windows overlooking the sea, received

word that Mrs. Colin Carson and her maid would arrive in time for luncheon and would stay over night.

When, several hours later, Mrs. Carson came out on the deserted veranda and looked over the budding foliage touched with its first green, there was in the loneliness of the place something that fitted in with the shadow that lay on her brilliant face.

Nothing is more desolate than a deserted summer resort, with its ghosts of past gaieties and its silences after laughter and music. Mrs. Carson moved to the railing of the veranda, and looked down on the terrace where, but a little while ago, she had had her last dinner with the man who was even now being married to another woman.

Ultimately, in almost every case, a man's interest in the woman he could not marry was at the mercy of any attractive girl whom he could marry. She supposed that was as it should be. Yet, at its beginning, how incapable of abrupt end had seemed her friendship with this young debonair of the bright blue eyes and the laughing voice, and the delicately repressed homage. How gay had been their little dinner, with the sound of the sea in their ears, how reckless their ride home!

And then Miss Whitney's white face as Jeffrey had carried her into Wrexford Thorne's study — and then — Wrexford Thorne himself! She looked out over

the water, recalling the grave gray eyes that had looked so clearly into the waste places of her life. Thorne was probably marrying Jeffrey to Miss Whitney now — and she had thought of nothing better to do on this wedding-day than to visit the semblance of a man whose name she bore that she might, perhaps, arrest this curious sense of desolation that she found within her, by some visualizing of the real facts of her life.

She studied the mental pain an instant, as it fastened itself on her nerves at the acknowledgment of a need to arrest it. Surely it was not the pain of love foregone. For all her knowledge of love, love as she had seen it,—sometimes sordid, sometimes reckless, sometimes sad,—faint voices of the spirit raised themselves within her to insist that she knew little of real love; that she had always been an onlooker.

This man had been but a casual guest of her heart,—the guest of a sun-filled morning and an idle dusk, and this pain was only the emptiness left by a dream foregone—yet it was heavy enough.

There were many dreams foregone in her life. They made a great waste place of her youth, whose shadow weighed her to the earth.

She moved listlessly down the steps, and stood on the bluff that looked over the sea, where the blue and gold water blazed into a million jewels in the afternoon sun.

"And I am blind to its beauty," she said, "all because of a foolish pain. Sick of it all, from its beauty to its black ugliness! Somehow I must find a cure for this sickness that is folly itself."

She looked out over the sunlit water to the dim shores of the Connecticut hills, searching for an answer, and heard only the denied voices of the spirit murmuring the answer born in Bethlehem of Judea: "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Only by forgetting self can self be cured of such sicknesses.

Ah, but that was what she had done in this affair with Percy Jeffrey — deliberately given him up.

Then the mocking imp that lived always in a corner of her brain laughed softly, and "You gave him up because it was wise, not because it was right," it answered her, "at the wise moment before he could give you up. There was no forgetting of self there — you did not love him, and therefore seek his best happiness. You diverted idle hours with the spirit of youth he represented, and, foreseeing its failure, you retreated."

She lifted her head, frowning impatiently, and turned from the sea, hating it, hating her own clear vision, flying from the small denied voices that, if she followed them, would utterly change her life.

She swung into a path through the woods that, after

a mile's walk, brought her out on the road that led to the sanatorium, two miles beyond, to the main road.

On one side of the road stood a deserted automobile. She stopped to look at it. Doubtless its driver had gone to the club garage for help.

As she stood beside it, from the direction of the Port Madison Sanatorium, there came a compact little car driven by a man who looked familiar to her. At the tableau in the road the man stopped his car and lifted his vizored cap.

"Trouble?" he asked. "Can I help you?"

A little familiar pulse quickened in the woman's breast. She swept the bright dark eyes and the dominant chin a lightning glance of appraisal. Given all the things of the day, nothing could have been more to her taste than this sudden promise of possible adventure that bade defiance to the clearer vision she wished to deny. Voice and bearing were those of a gentleman—the open road with its call lay beyond.

"Nothing can be done for the machine, I think," she said softly. "The chauffeur has gone to the club for a mechanic. But if you will, you can take me to the station. If I wait any longer I shall lose my train."

She raised to his very observant look the bluest of dark-lashed eyes.

"I shall be very glad to," said the man. "Will you leave a message for your chauffeur?"

Seeing her hesitate, and crediting it to another reason than the real one, the man took from his pocket a leather book, the kind a physician uses for his prescriptions, and tore a leaf from it. He offered it to her, with his pencil. She took it, and, when she saw printed at the top of the paper, "Carleton Thorne, M. D.", she looked up at him suddenly.

It was the merest trick of lowering lids flung suddenly open to let through a promise of clear understanding. Yet how was a man to guess? Understanding is so rare in this noisy world, and there is such a need of it.

Carleton Thorne spent his days with nervous and hysterical women who did not even know the meaning of self-control, and would, therefore, never know the meaning of control of others that comes of understanding them. He was used to looking into faces, and beneath them into characters and lives — it was his business to do it, and to do it accurately; his success was built on it.

But the woman before him, penciling her note, had in her face nothing that gave itself to the inquiry of a first look save a curious mocking quality as of one who knew what lay beneath and hid it, not liking it herself.

She pinned her message on the seat of the deserted car. He could not see that it read: "Kindly telephone Mrs. Carson's maid, Clauda, at the Belle Terre Club, not to expect Mrs. Carson for dinner."

He cranked the machine as she took her place in it, and recalling that the station was but a few miles away, he set off at his slowest speed. Beside him in the motor, she did not seem so young as she had seemed in the road. He took a closer look at her face and, because he was a physician, there were certain fine lines about the eyes that spoke to him of long strain, and other lines from the small straight nose to the mouth that meant repression at the expense of vitality. There was a pallor in her face that should not have been there in a woman so richly colored.

Being a man, her gown and hat seemed to him only a charming color scheme of blue and bronze that deepened her eyes and hair. A woman would have known that only the best artists of the world could have produced its exquisite simplicity.

"Are you running away?" he asked.

"Yes, from the sanatorium," she answered. "Is it not fortunate that I should find an alienist to help me? Will you test my sanity?"

"With pleasure," said the doctor promptly and they both laughed at each other, covering in the instant

the first stages of acquaintance. "What is your name?" said the doctor.

"Nadine," said Mrs. Carson.

It conveyed nothing to him but a refusal to put a surname to it.

"In what way do you preferably spend your time, Mademoiselle Nadine?"

"Preferably seeking my fortune; usually —" She hesitated.

"Yes?" he prompted, looking at her.

"Acting my various parts," said Nadine, with lowered lids and the ghost of a smile.

He took this in, trying to place her. It fitted in with every line in her face, with her poise that was not assurance, but the simplicity of trained expression; with the promise of understanding that had been the first thing about her that struck him. It is the histrionic temperament that can for the moment be the character it is studying, that is capable of the clearest comprehension and the most real sympathy.

She must be very lovely on the stage, where the color she lacked would give just the perfect finishing touch. Finding that she was watching him, as he thought this out, almost as if she could have interpreted the thought, he took refuge in words.

"And your leisure?" he said. "An inquiry into sanity always includes the way leisure is spent."

Her smile brightened.

"I spend mine quarreling with my neighbors, who will not let me study my fellow-man in peace. It is a significant symptom, is it not?"

"Very; but the significance lies in who wins — you — or your neighbors — or your fellow-man. Who does?"

"It has never been determined. As soon as I am very near solving this riddle of the sphinx — this query concerning what goes on four feet in infancy, two feet in maturity, and three feet in age, whose answer is man — I am interrupted by the need to demolish my intrusive neighbors."

"I should say, then," and Thorne chuckled, "that the fellow-man won."

"You are evidently among the supercilious males who think women ought not to understand men."

"It is my recollection of the old myth that if one engaged to solve the riddle one either had to succeed or forfeit one's head. A woman must let the problem alone or succeed."

"It is the fate waiting for all half-solved problems. If you were a woman, which would you do?"

"I would look pretty and let the matter alone. It suffices most men."

"Wear a veil and hie thee to a harem," she mocked. "Of what use to have brains or a soul and be a

woman? But how if you happen to prefer the other kind of men?"

"You must then run the risk of losing your head, even as in the days of the ancient myth."

A shadow fell on her brilliant face.

"Yes, some women of both brains and soul do — for the men they try to understand. They have even been known to die of it."

"It is their own fault," said the man.

She flashed him a look almost primal in its opposed sex.

"Oh, son of Adam!" she said.

He was nettled to instant defense.

"It is a good thing for the work of the world that needs to go on that men do not die for mere love. If men were to take any upset to their love plans, as women often do, bridges would not be built or the sick cured or the hungry fed. When a love affair comes to nothing with a woman, she has no other resources to take its place — and sooner or later she comes to us doctors. But a man goes the harder to work —"

"Or loves again," said Nadine, "or forgets it entirely, or gets drunk, or marries a widow for money, or seeks an adventure which he may find at any open door. If women could only believe it — but they never will! They will go on believing that the Arthurs and

the Lancelots and the Lohengrins are real — that each lover that comes is the one who will never forget.”

The mockery of her voice touched the theme so lightly that it did not occur to him that it was odd he should be so deep in a discussion almost sentimental as to resent the interruption of the approaching station.

He looked across the field, beyond which lay the little country station, with a waiting train before it, and he asked her the same question that his brother had asked of him a few hours earlier.

“Who gave you such insight?” he said.

“Verily not my sponsors in baptism,” said Nadine.

“Some man, then.”

“Why, this is masculine egotism gone mad. Not from one man does a woman learn of men.”

Carleton Thorne pondered this answer, and as he did so a little white puff of smoke came from across the field, the sound of a bell reached them, and the train for the city pulled out.

“I have lost the train,” said Nadine.

Thorne had come to the same conclusion, with a relief that might indeed be masculine egotism gone mad for all he knew or cared. He was only conscious that as he promised to get her into the city before the train, if she would accept his escort, her answer seemed, in importance, out of all proportion

to the time he had known her or the extent of his knowledge.

For, after a faint and apparently feminine hesitation, she accepted. And there was no way, of course, for Carleton Thorne to have known that the hesitation had been taken up with a passing wonder over who had found the message pinned to the abandoned automobile.

Thorne threw in the clutch to his third speed and turned the machine into the long country road, hung with its summer flags of scarlet, and orange, and green.

"I wonder," said the doctor, observing again in the silence that followed, the fatigue of her face, "if you do not work too hard. It is a vicious circle, you know: first overstrain of some kind — even moral strain will do it, often emotional strain — then exhaustion, then nerves that in turn bring one back to exhaustion."

"No," she answered. "At present I am idle."

He gave her an instant sympathy. The tragedy of a talented woman who wanted to act and was enforcedly idle rose before him. It was apt to mean so many uncomfortable things — even lack of the necessities. Yet the motor in the road and the chauffeur gone for help did not bear out that theory — unless indeed she had been driving with some man, and had wished to run away from him. This possibility, for

some reason, appealed to him. He smiled down at her.

"Then," he said, "it is the time for you to study your fellow-man, is it not?"

"It is," she answered. "I am doing it."

"And the neighbors?"

"Are negligible just now."

"What usually happens when you leave off studying the young man to rout the intruders?"

"He marries the first girl who has enough pretenses to make her seem able to keep up my traditions."

Carleton Thorne almost brought his car to a stop.

"Well, upon my word!" he exclaimed. The phrase had been on his lips in another form only that morning.

She gave him a thoughtful look.

"Have I perhaps struck at you unawares?"

"You have not," said the doctor swiftly. "I went this morning to that kind of a wedding, that is all."

"Was it generally acknowledged to be that kind of a wedding?"

"By no means. Are they ever? I could not even wring such an acknowledgment from my brother, who —"

"Of all people in the world ought to know," she said bitterly.

He paused, forgetting what he had meant to say when she interrupted. Then he could endure it no longer.

"Will you tell me who you are?" he said.

She looked out over the summer fields, over the flaunting flags of scarlet, and orange, and green, and into her eyes came the bitterness of her voice.

"I am Nadine Carson," she said. "The wife of Colin Carson."

And Carleton Thorne brought the car to a stop there in the middle of the road, and turned and looked on her as if he had never seen her before. And, "Good God!" he exclaimed, below his breath.

She made him no answer. She did not even trouble herself to return his look. And in the silence he went back over her statements, and found them, for all his lack of comprehension, true. Yet because they had fooled him so completely, because of his very lack of comprehension that now seemed so incredibly stupid, he found himself resentful beyond all reason.

"Masculine egotism gone mad, alienist," she said, still looking away from him.

At the acuteness of her comprehension of what he must be feeling, he found his resentment gaining an edge, and at the same time he found himself not above a desire to alter this cool assurance opposed to him.

"I have but just left your husband, Mrs. Carson," he said. "I was called to the sanatorium to examine him."

He was successful to the extent of bringing her eyes back from their careless wandering to an intent focus on his face.

"You were asked to examine — Colin Carson?" Her voice that had held, in the last half-hour, raillery and bitterness, softness and sweetness, came now cold and keen as a breath of winter air. "How could you have been asked to do this save by my order?"

"I was asked by Harding and by the doctor in charge. To-morrow Judge Landon is to examine him. He is much improved, and if he successfully passes to-morrow's examination he may be discharged."

Carleton Thorne watched her narrowly. She sat perfectly still for a few seconds, scarcely seeming to breathe, her eyes blue steel in a face grown hard and white. Watching her, Thorne found it a finer face, for all its hardness, than it had been in its mocking brilliance.

"Mr. Harding," she said at length, "received from me, a little while ago, notice that I would dispense with his services next month. He has some plan — something big. He expected to put it through without my finding it out. My dismissal has interrupted him

and made waste paper of his plans. He could only put them through, backed by the prestige of his position with the Carson estate. It is evident that he plans — Colin's release — to help him. He could always control Colin — when he — chose. It must be a larger thing than even I thought, if he will run such risks as these; when he takes courage to employ a perfectly reputable physician to help put it through — and Judge Landon. He, of course, is more malleable."

At the suggestion implied in her words, Thorne bridled.

"Mrs. Carson," he said, "I spent two hours yesterday trying to reach you to ask you if this examination of your husband was unobjectionable to you. This morning I tried again. I even waylaid my brother after Jeffrey's wedding to ask him if he knew where you were to be found. When I arrived at the sanatorium I found it was to be a habeas corpus proceeding, in which you, as your husband's guardian, were not involved. Mr. Carson has had a stationary period. He is much improved and —"

She broke in with a cry in which some long self-control seemed to give way.

"Ah! You saw him guarded and supported — for an hour — at his best. You have not seen him day and night for months, as I have — stationary —

perhaps — yes, but mad enough to make life a hideous thing for every living thing that came near him. Eccentricity, it was called, because of his millions, and nobody dared interrupt him while he tied his dog, the only living thing that was loyal to him, to the bed, and cut it to pieces — alive — while he tortured other dumb things — horses and birds.

“This was degeneracy, yes, but not mania, and one puts up with degeneracy when it is protected with such wealth.

“And John Harding, with his gift of cajolery, working even then for foothold, scheming for the management of this colossal power held by a half-crazy man — he could control Colin Carson. I knew what he wanted, even then. I am no fool, though to this day Harding will not credit it. But I was living a life no wanderer in a desert could equal — with terror in my days and horror at night. I welcomed anything that would take my husband from my sight. It was nothing to me that Harding made it pay him a fortune. And at the last when Colin’s mania for setting fire to everything near him finally brought him into the police court, it was Harding who had Colin put in the Port Madison Sanatorium. I was glad that he should have as his reward a place in the management of the estate, for a time.”

“Ah,” said Carleton Thorne, “you worked to-

gether, then. Now you are working apart; that is the difference."

Into her face came a sudden flush that colored it to a fulfilment of its promise of loveliness, and the doctor found himself clutching at all the stories he had heard of her to support his suspicions.

"You know Colin Carson is not fit to be released," she said. "He is not sane, for all your fortunate hour with him. He is a dangerous and corrupting influence. If by any act of yours he goes free you will have done an indefensible thing."

"Are you not willing to leave it to to-morrow's examination? It will be a fair one. They told me at the sanatorium that you were expected to be present."

"How could that be? Nobody at my home knew that I was spending the night at Belle Terre Club. Harding expected and was told that I could not be reached. That is probably why he is acting, now. It was the merest chance that brought me in your way to-day. If they told you this, it in itself should warn you. No, I am not willing to leave it to the chance of a lucid interval that I know perfectly will be only an interval. You do not know the corrupting power of this great hoard of money. Even a judge can be reached — if not by the money itself, by some of the gifts it can command. If you engage in this

intrigue, your own probity will be questioned — and justly."

"I think not," he answered promptly.

She looked at him intently a moment.

"Will you not," she said at length, "wait a week or two and then examine him again? And will you not let it be a more careful examination?"

It was evident even to her troubled senses that she had, in her anxious desire to make the matter clear to him, said the one thing that touched his professional pride.

"I will examine him again to-morrow," he answered, "and, if the judge so orders, after a week or two, or at any time I am asked to. By to-morrow it will be a court case, Mrs. Carson. I have also made the most careful inquiries of the physician in charge."

"Yes, Harding could not do this thing alone," she said. "You will observe that he has not called in any one of the doctors who were originally on the case."

"I observe," said Thorne grimly.

"Will you drive on?" she answered. "And will you mind hurrying? We have been here a long time."

The car bounded over the level road, and through the miles the woman did not speak. Occasionally he

watched her as she sat brooding, and there was nothing either in his own brief experience with her or in anything he had ever heard of her that gave him faith in her — for his physician's skill did not reach to those small voices of the spirit that, even in the shadow of the waste places, are tirelessly molding character; it stopped at flesh, and blood, and nerves.

She sat still and absorbed; going slowly over the list of men she knew — men to whom she had given much of inspiration, of understanding, of awakening — and on whom she might justly count for service. And as she put aside each name as useless in her emergency, a ghastly thing began to become a certainty to her.

These were men who stood ready to take, but not to give. They offered her love either frankly or with subtlety, and were of those who could offer love to a woman debarred from accepting it — pirates of sentimentality, dishonored from the start. Not to any one of these could she turn for this service that brought her mad husband before them — scarcely for any service involving risk.

It was a simple thing to go to the sanatorium, and as her husband's guardian remove him quietly before he came under the jurisdiction of the court. She knew just the place to take him, across the Sound into Connecticut. But she needed a man's help — a man

quiet, and strong, and resourceful — and she needed it at once. To-morrow would not do. There were no men in her own or her husband's family, save Colin's cousin, Judge Wallace, and he was too ill to be of service.

She considered help that could be bought; but this took time, and she had only a few hours. Then, as the motor rattled on the Long Island ferry, she thought of the archdeacon, whose charities she had financed; to whose plans she had lent the wit that made their success.

"He is vain and he seeks the easy path, but he is not one of these birds of prey," she said. "I will ask him."

"Where shall I drive you?" asked Carleton Thorne. "To your home?"

"If you please," she said. "But be kind enough to let me stop at the ferry station a moment to telephone."

Over the telephone the archdeacon took her request to meet her at her home in fifteen minutes with apparent pleasure. He came up the steps of her house as she arrived there. She took his hand a moment, with a quick look into his face.

"Will you go into the library while I give an order?" she said.

He had never been admitted to the library before,

and he sat down, taking in its more intimate personal atmosphere with surprise. There were hundreds of books, yet they looked used. There were wonderful paintings and soft quiet corners, where rare old editions tempted one to pause.

Before him, as he sat near the open door, waiting for his hostess, a mocking *Belle Dame Sans Merci* bent from her dull gold frame over a distraught but ecstatic knight. He looked at it while the sound of Mrs. Carson's voice came to him through the doorway.

"Brooks," she said, "you will have the limousine at the door in fifteen minutes. Tell Hayes to see that it is in perfect condition to make a very fast run, and get ready yourself to ride outside with Hayes. We shall be gone about three hours. Claudia is at Belle Terre, so have one of the other maids bring me fresh veils and handkerchiefs — and I must have a check book and ready money. Speak to Mrs. Forest about it, and ask her to get me the Bradport Hospital on the telephone. You have the name? Call me when she gets them. The hospital is in Connecticut."

She entered the library, closed the door, and faced the archdeacon.

"Will you go with me to the Port Madison Sanatorium and help me to remove my husband to a quieter hospital across the Sound in Connecticut? He is in

one of his lucid intervals, and will, I think, come quietly; but I need a man I can rely on to help me. One of the trustees of the estate is trying to get my husband out to sign papers he will not know the meaning of, and they will take him before a judge to-morrow. I can not be sure of the outcome, but I know he ought not to be released. I am perfectly willing to leave it to competent alienists, but I do not think this thing, as planned, is going to be fair. All I need is to gain time—a day or two and I can meet these intriguers on their own ground—but now I must act at once, in this way. I am Colin Carson's guardian. At the private sanatorium where he is confined they must deliver him to me if I demand him, if I am not content with their care and their arrangements. But in this case I can not do this alone. I need—a friend who will help me.”

There was nothing of the histrionic about Nadine Carson now. Nor yet beguilement, nor appeal of sex. She put her case before the man without haste, but with no wasted words, and her face was, in its hard whiteness, a new face to him.

He hesitated. It was a strange thing she asked of him—it was scarcely respectable—especially for a priest. Had he been a doctor—or even a lawyer!

“Well?” she said.

“But it may make a scandal,” he answered. “Is

there no other way? The doctors who sent him there —”

“I have thought of them. There were three. Two of them are not home from their summer vacation; the other one I could not reach when I tried to at the ferry at the time I telephoned you. I am not sure, either, that if I did reach him he would act against Carleton Thorne, the physician who made to-day’s examination, and his very good friend.”

The archdeacon caught at the name almost with eagerness.

“Carleton Thorne! Wrexford Thorne’s brother! Ah — I — could scarcely act myself — against Wrexford Thorne’s brother — if he is in the case. Dear lady, as much as I long to do anything that I can for you —”

“The man is mad. It is not only for me, but for decency’s sake — this thing these men plan to do is wrong.”

“In that case, my dear Mrs. Carson, you have nothing to fear from a process at law. I am sorry —”

She gave him a long clear look.

“You, too,” she said.

“Ask me anything else. Indeed, if there is anything else that I can do, I shall be so glad. But, you see, so much of my work is with Wrexford Thorne and — his own brother — and my own calling —”

He paused, finding that she was not listening. Once more her mind ran over those whom perhaps she could hire to help her, and paused uncertain. There must be no uncertainty in the thing. It needed intelligence to carry through — perhaps physical strength.

The archdeacon, perceiving that she had forgotten him, coughed.

"If I were not —" he paused suddenly, finding his contemplated excuse, as he faced her fearless eyes, very banal.

"If you were not so ornamental a pillar of social service," said Nadine softly. "I understand." She opened the library door. "Will you excuse me? You see I have much to do."

The archdeacon assisted an imperiled dignity by slowness of retreat. As he left, a long powerful motor drew up to the door.

In the library Nadine walked to and fro from the *Belle Dame*, leaning mockingly from her frame, to the desk telephone that promised her instant speech with many men who had asked to serve her. One by one she once more considered these men for whose friendship she had laughed at gossip, considered them with the clear brain that left her so few illusions, and one by one she took the measure of such friendship. Not one — no, not one — but would answer her as

the man who had just left had answered her. Truly she had gone far into this shadow of the waste places where no friendship lay.

Then she suddenly paused.

"Ah," she said, on a long-drawn note, "he will do it—he puts a meaning into friendship—a meaning of service. Because he was Percy Jeffrey's friend he troubled himself not only over what was good for him but what was right."

Gravely and with a hesitation she rarely knew, Nadine took the receiver from the telephone. When she hung it up her face had softened and into the gravity had come a certain quality of sweetness, apparent even to the servitors of her household as they waited to equip her for her sudden journey.

She held a few minutes' colloquy with the Connecticut hospital, and summoned her lawyer to a next morning's appointment; then she passed down the steps to the waiting automobile.

"Hayes," she said, "you will drive first to the parish house four squares down the street."

The long afternoon settled reluctantly into twilight. The city put on its evening dress of jeweled lights. The crowds began to throng the restaurants, and presently to move from there to the theaters, then home from the theaters through crowded subway and crowded streets.

The archdeacon, restless and troubled, left the parish house where he had waited all evening for a rector who did not come, and walked slowly up the street. In the great Carson house there were few lights. He paused as he approached it, wondering; and as he paused a limousine swept around the corner and stopped before the door.

The archdeacon moved nearer, and then stood still again, incapable of moving. For out of the limousine had stepped Nadine Carson, and with her was Wrexford Thorne. They stood a moment together before the steps, and in the dim light the archdeacon saw her look up at the man at her side with a look a man would be glad to remember.

"I thank you," she said, and in her voice lay a grave sweetness. "You have indeed been my friend."

"I was glad to have had the chance. I was deeply in your debt."

"And your brother? What will he say?"

"Whatever it is I shall be glad to answer it. I think he himself will be glad eventually that no action could be taken on his hasty first decision," said Wrexford Thorne.

"Good night," she said, and again there were the grave sweet tones in her voice that the other man had never heard before. "It is not only the service

itself; it is that you would do it — only you among them all.”

“You did not ask it of the others,” he answered gently. “It was a right thing to do. I think you would have found most of them willing.”

Nadine looked at him in a moment’s silence, then she took her first step out of the shadow of the waste places.

“It is enough,” she said, “that I could not have asked them — no — not one of them — not even your other friend — who was married to-day.”

CHAPTER IV

"A certain man went down to Jericho and fell among thieves. But a certain Samaritan, came where he was and had compassion on him."

A PHYSICIAN whose hospital service includes daily operations, whose office hours are occupied with a half-hundred patients a day, and whose practice is built on hard-won success in difficult nervous cases has no time for the nursing of a grudge.

When, therefore, Carleton Thorne found that Mrs. Carson had prevented both the release of her husband and the expression of outside opinion on his sanity, he gave a few minutes' consideration to her cleverness, that his brother, the rector, had called abnormal, without any great discomfiture over being outwitted by it. It was not until a week later that he learned that the rector had had an appreciable share in this cleverness, and to this fact he gave more than a few minutes' consideration.

A clever woman adds interest to any situation, but a clever beauty is a power. When a woman is lovely in the appealing way that for centuries has been effective with men; when she barbs her loveliness with

understanding; when she holds in lavish hands generations of hoarded wealth, one expects doors to swing wide for her and men to do her service. But when one suddenly finds among these men one's own brother — a man to whose profession the slightest breath of scandal would be a grave misfortune — it is apt to take more than a few minutes' consideration for the mere gaging of possibilities.

The doctor opened the door of his brother's study at the front of the parish house and then he laughed. For the rector was staring at the pile of women's letters that lay on his desk with a look of utter exasperation.

"It was announced in some foolish paper," said Wrexford Thorne, "that my congregation was about to allow me a month's vacation. These are invitations."

"It would not happen if you had a wife," said the doctor. "Why don't you get one?"

"Get one yourself. A doctor needs a wife more than a rector."

"Some day I shall. But when a man reaches thirty-five, he is either ready to marry any attractive woman because domesticity begins to appeal to him, or else he takes his requirements into such serious account that mating is not easy. Have you met many women you would like to spend your life with?"

"If you met more than two or three, I should think you might get confused," said the rector. "Have you met one?"

The doctor looked out of the window at an automobile drawing up to the curb behind his own.

"I have never met but one girl I really wanted to see as often — as often as she would let me," he said. "But she had the germ of infinite variety in her. It promised to develop into a gift as she grew older. Most of the women I meet are pretty much alike, save those who are making their own living. A good half of the others are wasters, trading off their amiability and their looks for their support and acquiring in their leisure the nerves that bring them to me. For one woman who comes to me for help as a result of overwork there are a hundred who come as a result of lazy bodies and vacant minds, or for repair from the dissipation that idleness breeds."

"And the one girl?" asked the rector. "Where is she?"

"I have no idea. I met her the summer I was loafing about the Italian lakes after my two years in Germany. She was with her father who was trying to recover from overwork and had nervous symptoms I should like to have studied. You know the rapid acquaintance a summer resort facilitates. She agreed to let me know when she returned to America — and

that was all. I did not hear from her again. Rex, do you mind telling me how you happened to help Mrs. Carson in this little matter of the release of her husband — in which you knew I was on the other side?"

"Yes, I do mind — except to tell you that I thought she was right and you were wrong."

"It was almost brilliant of her to pick out my own brother to prevail against me. I should like to ask her about it but for the fact that at the end of our unexpected ride, after I had refused to take her views or have confidence in her, there was nothing to lead me to suppose that she would again welcome speech with me."

The rector gathered up the pile of women's letters with a curious look at the back of his brother's head as the doctor stood at the window.

"Mrs. Carson was trying to get you on the telephone this morning. She even telephoned here. It is some professional matter she wants you to handle."

The doctor wheeled about.

"What!" he exclaimed.

The rector rose to answer a knock at the hall door.

"There is no use," he said, "in asking a man who says he understands women to explain them."

"The man who says he understands this particular woman —" began the doctor, and then both men were

smitten into silence. For in the doorway as Wrexford Thorne opened it stood a slim figure, wrapped in a silk motor coat of gray-blue.

"It looks," said Nadine Carson, "as if I had pursued you. But they told me at your office, Doctor Thorne, that you were here, and as I am leaving in an hour for Long Island I was anxious to talk with you first. May I come in and speak to you here?"

Under the corn-flowers of her blue hat her long eyes, the bluer for the color about them, rested on the doctor with no apparent memory of their last interview. Again the contradiction of her face, with its passionate promise and its cool denial of fulfilment, struck the doctor, demanding his curious attention. Excellently poised as he knew Wrexford to be, he found himself wondering if his brother could escape the response invoked by those long quiet eyes with their promise of a chance awakening. The vague possibilities whose consideration had driven him to his brother's study a half-hour ago assumed more definite form.

The rector was the first one to recover his voice.

"Will you sit down, Mrs. Carson?" he said.

"Thank you. I have come, of course, for help. I am on the road to Jericho, and a little farther on there lies a man who has fallen among the modern thieves of usefulness. It is for him that I need your help.

Perhaps after all these years the priest and the Levite may yet be good Samaritans."

It took the doctor a few seconds to envisage Mrs. Carson in the rôle of good Samaritan and he was silent through sheer astonishment. Then he said:

"I hope we can help you. That is Rex's especial business, and sometimes it is mine."

"You both know," she said, "that I have had the guardian of my husband's estate removed. In searching for a man to take his place, I hoped to find some especial qualities that are not easy to find together. I wanted maturity, and executive ability, and honesty. And I wanted a man — a man — to whom the fact that I was a woman would make no difference. I have no men relatives of my own, and the Carson family is almost equally lacking. But there was one man who seemed especially fitted for this work — or who would be so fitted if he were in better health. Colin's father and this man's mother were brother and sister. Failing other heirs, there is a chance that the Carson money might go to him and his daughter. There are but the two of them. But he has always disliked Colin Carson — and —" she hesitated — "he has no respect for a woman who could have married him.

"But because he was an able man and a Carson connection, perhaps because of his very honesty in the

matter of his dislike of everything that had anything to do with Colin Carson, even to his refusal to touch any of his money, I have kept a kind of watch on him; especially since he left the bench."

Carleton Thorne suddenly leaned forward in his chair.

"Several years ago," Mrs. Carson continued in her low voice, "he was in a frightful wreck. I believe he was only slightly injured, but the after-sights of mutilation and death got on his nerves and he never recovered his strength. He finally gave up his office, and went abroad for a while with his daughter, but he had not accumulated much money and they came home after a little while, and for the last year they have been living at a little place they have on Long Island. His name is Wallace."

"I know him," said Carleton Thorne. "If it is the Judge Wallace who — has a daughter — Amy."

Mrs. Carson seemed so little surprised that for a moment the doctor wondered if she had known of his having met Judge Wallace and his daughter abroad.

"Yes," she said simply. "His daughter's name is Amy, and your knowing them will make matters easier should you decide to interest yourself in them."

"When I began to think of him as especially fitted for the position I had to offer, I hoped he would feel

that he could accept some of the Carson money if he earned it, and so I went to see him. He is living in a little five-roomed cottage they have near Port Madison, and about an hour's run from my own place at Belle Terre Club. Miss Amy has been teaching a country school that she might be with her father and keep him in the country. It is — tragic! You both know the man. He was a brilliant jurist. His daughter is — charming. I give you but the meager facts but perhaps you who meet such facts every day and look behind them can see what it means to this man to give up his work and his life, and to see his daughter bear the burden of his support.

“It has so far softened him that he gave me as his only reason for the refusal of my offer that he was utterly unable to do continuous work. He even told me, in answer to my inquiry, a little about his illness,— constant headache and hours of faintness. It was this, he said, that made him give up his office. Yet when I asked him what his physician said, I discovered that since his return from Italy he has had no doctor. He gave as his reason his belief that there was small hope for him—but I think perhaps it is sheer poverty joined to his abnormal pride. It is, of course, only my own idea, but it seemed to me that he was waiting to die and—hoping for his daughter's sake that it would not take him too long.

"I can not, perhaps, make you feel as I did about it — that it was a great pity and a great waste, but I came away determined that it should not be — determined all the more because he would accept nothing from me, that I would not be denied in this. I think I should never escape the conviction that I could have prevented it — if the man should die and his daughter suffer — that I might have been more persuasive, that I might have put it differently. I have thought and thought what I could do. You see but for me this money or some of it would be at their disposal; therefore any money expended on him is only right — and I have so much! It is not often that I am refused."

Carleton Thorne spoke. "This determination on his part, this assertive will power does not look neurasthenic. Men suffering from exhausted nerves usually suffer at the same time from exhausted will power. They are vacillating and without self-control."

Mrs. Carson gave him the deep clear look, that no man seeing, would ever after believe her to be a woman immersed in mere events.

"This is what I want — and why I have come to you for it. I want a doctor familiar with all the late achievements in the rehabilitation of wasted nervous vitality. But I want him to have other resources in case this should not prove a case of nerve exhaustion,

but of some overlooked matter. You are both surgeon and physician. I want also a doctor who will make friends with a cultured and able man; who will persuade him to let himself be helped — for any reason — for his daughter's sake — for the doctor's pride of achievement — it does not matter. And in your case there is just that little touch of — fate — if one believes in fate — the fact that you already know them."

"The little touch of fate," said the doctor gravely, "amounts to this: I would rather help these two people than do anything else that I can think of — just now."

"It lends me superstition," said Mrs. Carson, "that you are the man needed, and can, therefore, hope for success. You will undertake it then?"

"I shall be glad to try it. And I will do my best."

"Thank you," she said simply. "About a half-mile from Judge Wallace's there is an old-fashioned farmhouse presided over by a delightful spinster of fifty whom I know. She has a Virginian colored cook. She will take you in. There are horses and there is room for your automobile. If you motor to and from town you will be able to attend your office hours and your necessary outside work, I should think. It is conceivable that you should be quietly spending a semi-vacation on Long Island. I shall be at Belle Terre,

but an hour away; and you can reach me any time by telephone."

"I can be ready to go in three days," said the doctor.

"I will send you the address and the route for your motor. The rest I shall leave to you, unless I can help, in which case I shall be glad to do whatever I can. Good-by and again — thank you."

The door closed behind her. The two men looked at each other silently. A faint fragrance lingered in the room.

Carleton Thorne took out a cigar and lighted it.

"You had better spend part of your vacation with me, Rex. A farm on Long Island where there are horses, with Belle Terre but an hour away, can not be so very bad, and it will dispose admirably of all those letters you seem unable to answer."

Wrexford Thorne walked over to the window, his hands in his pockets. He stared out of the window so many minutes that anybody but a nerve specialist would have grown restless. But his brother only puffed on his cigar and watched him gravely. Presently the rector turned and came back to his desk, and Carleton Thorne saw in his face the look of a man who has been far and in a hurried time, with scarcely a chance to consider what he has seen or to put it into proportionate place.

"Will you go with me, Rex," said Carleton Thorne,

"while I see if I can fulfil Mrs. Carson's commission?"

"Yes," said Wrexford Thorne, looking away again to the ends of the earth. "Yes, I think I shall go with you."

CHAPTER V

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

AS the sunlight filtered through Wrexford Thorne's muslin-curtained windows a fortnight later and fell on prim old mahogany and spotless linen, he turned over in bed without remembering that it was Sunday. It was not until his drowsy eye lighted on the line loose on its reel and the rubber boots dumped over on his bait-box that it occurred to him that it would not be seemly for him to fish that day. Carleton would doubtless be busy about his own affair which that morning assumed the form of taking Judge Wallace motoring. The doctor had not as yet presented the rector to either the judge or his daughter.

Down the hallway came the sound of rapid footsteps.

"Get up, Here-Endeth-The-Conversation," came Carleton Thorne's voice outside the door. "Get up and hear the little birds sing praises."

Thus besought, Wrexford Thorne turned over in bed.

"You have a soft call, Son-of-Steam-Calliope," he said. "Come nearer that I may lose no single note."

The doctor, resplendent in white flannels, closed the door behind him and stood over his brother's bed.

"What makes you so gay?" asked the rector.

The doctor chuckled.

"I have just learned our hostess' first name after a violent flirtation and much shameless love-making. You would never guess it! Jossus, with no chance to change it, is bad enough for a last name, but the first name is worse."

"Her first name is Agnes," said the rector.

"Not at all. Her first names is Azalea! Miss 'Azalea Jossus! And she has become sufficiently fond of me to deplore my exceeding worldiness. She thinks a brother of Wrexford Thorne ought to be more spiritual. She is going to talk with you about it. She thinks your charity ought to begin at home."

The rector let this pass.

"How is your patient—or is he merely your friend?"

"He does not know he is my patient. But I have happened to be with him during several of his attacks of nausea, and yesterday when we were alone in the house, he lost consciousness. I deliberately took the opportunity to examine him. Since he admitted to me that he was struck on the head in this wreck, I have been forming the theory that there was some injury that went unrecognized at the time, whose indications

were afterward taken to be nervous. I was exceedingly anxious to make an examination of his head. There is no outward sign of fracture, yet I could almost swear to a fracture of the inner table of the skull.

"This man is no neurasthenic. He is entirely self-controlled. He is even able to hide his pain, which is often overwhelming, from his daughter. On the other hand, there are a number of symptoms that indicate brain pressure. This morning I am going to talk X-ray to him. When I do, I will, of course, have to admit my surgical interest in him."

"Can he be cured?"

"If my diagnosis is correct, it is a beautiful operation with a large chance of recovery. It needs only to remove the pressure—and, of course, ability to rally from the operation. The man's nutrition has not been good for a long time. He has been living too economically, and his recurrent nausea debilitates him."

"Does his daughter know how serious it is?"

"She watches him very closely, and she is acutely intelligent; but I have not spoken to her of her father yet—save in inquiry. I shall do so as soon as I am sure of my diagnosis. Aren't you going to get up?"

"How can I when you are discoursing medically without pause?"

"I'll show you," said the doctor.

There ensued a spectacle that would have been incredible to a serious-minded congregation accustomed to dignity, and to a nervous clientele controlled by gravity.

It ended in the appearance of Miss Jossus at the head of the stairway and an abashed retirement of a pajama-attired figure with flying bare feet.

The doctor, a trifle breathless, surveyed his hostess ruefully.

"He is accustomed, Miss Azalea," he said, "to having his vestments warmed for him on Sundays, and I was only trying to make him feel at home. The result is that my beautiful clean flannels look as if they had been worn a week. These spiritual men are ungrateful beasts, Miss Azalea. Don't you ever marry one!"

Miss Jossus set her glasses on her nose, and looked at the doctor.

"I am waiting for a bishop," she said. "That is what has kept me single. So few bishops come this way."

The doctor seemed suddenly struck with a happy thought. "Would an archdeacon do, Miss Azalea? I know one who wants a wife very much indeed — and who wants her plump. I'll ask him out if you say so."

But Miss Jossus was not to be placated with a lesser light. Nothing but a bishop would do.

"I came up-stairs," she concluded, "to tell you young men that breakfast is ready, and that there are waffles."

The doctor tucked her arm under his, and but for the avoirdupois that he had called plumpness, she might be said to have pranced with him up the hall.

"There!" he cried breathlessly, "you tell my brother. I am afraid."

He thumped on the door.

"Well?" came from within.

The doctor gave the lady an encouraging nudge.

"Go on," he said. "He's no bishop."

"Mr. Thorne," she said hesitatingly, "breakfast is ready."

The doctor sent forth a permeating falsetto in an attempt to continue the narrative in the same voice.

"And there are waffles," said he.

"I'll be there in three minutes," called Wrexford Thorne, "but don't wait for me."

"See," said the doctor, "a bishop would have made you wait. Indeed, I believe you said a bishop had made you wait."

"No, sir, I did not. No bishop made me wait. I was doing it of my own accord."

The doctor accompanied her to the stairway. "I

don't understand it at all," he said. "You would make an ideal parson's wife. You look motherly, and you would always dress modestly. Think how you would shine at a missionary meeting! Do let me send for the archdeacon."

"No. One distinguished rector at a time is all I can stand in the house."

A little later Miss Azalea, behind an ancient silver coffee-pot, inquired of the doctor why he did not say grace. The doctor's clever eyes lighted with laughter as they rested on his brother.

"Mighty few meals worthy of it," he said, pouring syrup on his waffle. "I would not insult Deity by thanking Him for some of the meals I get."

"You could say grace after your meals," said Miss Jossus. "Do you not think so, Mr. Thorne?"

"Yes, I do," said the rector, without hesitation.

"Do you think it's my soul needs fixing, Miss Azalea?" asked the doctor, his appreciation of her interest confined to a faint vibration of voice that his brother understood perfectly.

"Do you know whether you have one or not?" said the rector.

"What!" said Miss Jossus.

"He thinks," said the doctor, "that one's soul is like one's liver; in the best condition when one does not know one has it."

"But if nobody else knows it—" began Miss Jossus.

The doctor sighed. "But, dear lady, Cupid himself had no soul before he met Psyche."

The allusion here was a little beyond Miss Jossus, but she made a brave reply.

"It's a good deal for even a heathen god to expect to have a woman hand him out a soul."

"He married her for it," declared the doctor blithely.

"Then he probably got more than she did," said Miss Jossus, filling the rector's coffee-cup.

"You like the story of Undine better?" said the doctor.

Miss Azalea frankly admitted her ignorance.

"The man gave the woman a soul when he married her," continued the doctor. "Just a sort of wedding present, you know."

"It couldn't be," said Miss Azalea indignantly. "Nobody can give souls about that way. Not even husbands."

"But I thought your knowledge of husbands," objected the doctor, "was limited to very slow bishops."

Miss Azalea appealed to the rector.

"It is true nevertheless, is it not, Mr. Thorne? People can not be given souls. They just have them."

"I suppose they can be given realization of what they have," said the rector. "Perhaps Carl is talking

about the interpretation of one's higher self by love." And the rector smiled into his plate.

Miss Jossus looked expectantly at the doctor, but the young man was staring at his brother with a faint frown.

"I wonder if I was," he finally replied, and fell into a thoughtful pause, dissecting his crisp waffles silently.

The rector watched him. They were very close friends. Theoretically, each would have approved of marriage for the other. But practically, no mother giving up an idealized son to a stranger woman would have measured her more critically than either of these brothers would measure the woman the other chose. Wrexford Thorne had had his surmises during the last fortnight, but confident that for all he might hear from his brother, they would remain surmises, he did not concern himself very much about them — waiting until Carl himself should invite him to meet Judge Wallace and the daughter Mrs. Carson had called attractive.

"Are you going to church, Parson?" asked Carleton Thorne suddenly.

"I am not," replied his brother. "I am going to ride Bucephalus."

"His name is Jack," said Miss Jossus.

"Rex sighs for more worlds to conquer, Miss Azalea, having vanquished the flesh and the —"

Miss Azalea hastily interrupted.

"What *has* that to do with it?"

"Bucephalus was Alexander's horse, and Alec was a blasé young thing, you'll recall. All of Rex's horses are Bucephali — like Mark Twain's Ferguson-guides. But you ought to see that one of your guests goes to church, Miss Azalea."

Miss Jossus shook her head.

"There is no service in our church this Sunday," she said regretfully. "Our turn is next week."

"Well that let's us all out," said the doctor.

As Wrexford Thorne took the coast road with Bucephalus, he let his mind dwell on the tragedy that he and his brother had touched but lightly in their speech.

It sounded a simple thing to say that ill-health had driven a brilliant man to exile in the country, but behind it lay failure, and pain, and that poverty that may not confess itself and is but the harder to bear. Thorne recalled that Miss Jossus had dwelt on the courage of the fight that the girl had made; hurrying home from her little country school to order and maintain her small household in comfort and cleanliness, and with it all finding time to walk about the country with her father, sometimes talking with him, sometimes hunting mushrooms, at all times compan-

ioning him. It would be no wonder if such a girl proved attractive to his brother.

The horse turned the curve of the road and shied suddenly, and Thorne, reining him in, looked for the cause. A four-rail fence divided the road from an apple orchard whose trees were bending under un-ripened fruit.

On the third rail of the fence, holding a post by one hand and with one foot poised on the top rail, stood a girl, possibly in her twenties, but whose slightness gave her an added youthfulness. Under her arm she carried a garden hat that had been full of apples. The start that the spectacle of the plunging horse had given her just as she was climbing the fence, had upset the hat, and two dozen green apples rolled into the road.

In an instant Thorne was off his horse, had thrown his bridle over a fence post, and taken his cap from his head.

"Did my horse frighten you? I am sorry. May I pick up the apples?"

"I think," she said, with the faintest accentuation of color, "that I frightened the horse." Then she added a little phrase that lifted the apology into a conversation. "And no wonder," she said.

She put the other foot over the fence rail, and disregarding the hand Thorne involuntarily held out to

assist her, she reached the ground with a flash of slim ankle and a swift grace that accented the impression of youth she gave. As Thorne knelt to pick up the apples, the girl watched him curiously.

"You will make yourself sick eating these," said Thorne as he laid them in her hat.

He looked up in time to catch a quickly suppressed flicker of mirth on the girl's face.

"Perhaps I am not going to eat them this way. One can stew apples."

"Oh," said Thorne, still looking at her.

A girl who gathers apples from the roadside to stew them is different from one who takes an apple or two to eat while passing a tempting tree.

Nut-brown and scarlet, her eyes and lips lent her face a piquancy borne out by provocative chin and curling hair.

"And then," she added, "there are apple pies and dumplings."

"For which let us praise Allah," said Thorne, handing her her laden hat.

She responded to his Allah instantly.

"I thank you, Affendi," she said; and for all its lightness, the phrase had a sound of dismissal.

Thorne put on his cap, and lingeringly mounted his horse. The girl leaned against the fence post frankly watching him. She bent her head at his good-by, and

was still watching as he turned in his saddle for a final salutation where the road dipped over the hill.

Thorne let Bucephalus walk home in his effort to select the station occupied by a girl who could climb fences and raid orchards, and yet employ a manner absolutely perfect for the dismissal of a strange man.

He met Carleton at the stable door. "The judge is now my patient," said the doctor. "He will actually let me try to help him — for his daughter's sake — and — for — my — own. But only if there is a chance of his being able to pay me."

"Is it not time then for Mrs. Carson's offer to be repeated to Judge Wallace?" asked the rector.

"It soon will be; meantime I have another plan."

He hesitated and the rector's nimble mind reached out after possibilities.

"You will put yourself under obligation to him — and strive to repay it with your skill?"

"Exactly," said the doctor, smiling thoughtfully. "You recall the old fairy tale of the father the Beast released for the gift of —"

"The first thing that came out to meet him on his way home," said the rector.

"The Beauty," supplied the doctor.

"Yes," said the rector, struggling with a curious sense of loss.

It was several days after this that Wrexford Thorne decided to fish in the little creek that came down between the hills back of the Jossus farm. The creek lagged through corn-fields and cabbage patch under a culvert that upheld the road, and then splashed into the Sound a mile from the house.

It was too sunny and warm for bass. They lay lazily in the depths of the creek, not even stirred to curiosity over Thorne's switching line. But the angler was quite happy. The perspiration rolled off his forehead from damp hair straying into ringlets that would have annoyed him could he have seen it. The sleeves of his pale blue shirt were rolled above his elbows, and the sun was peeling the skin off the indoor fairness of his arms. He had taken off his collar, and the sun was having as easy a time with his neck as with his arms, but the young man did not seem to mind.

He climbed the barbed-wire fence that marked the boundary of the Jossus farm with easy disregard of a tear the barbs made in the long stockings he wore with his knickerbockers. He stepped into an abandoned tomato patch that skirted the creek; gathered a tomato from among the weeds that had choked the patch; sunk his teeth into its red juice, and realized for the first time how hot he was. A clump of wil-

lows on the edge of the creek invited him. He found another tomato and made for them.

As he approached, a slim figure sat up from the long grass where it had been lying at full length with hands under a hatless head. Thorne paused.

"You!" he said, and raised his cap.

The girl looked at him a second, then down at a little basket of tomatoes that lay at her side. Then she said:

"Yes, I believe so."

With her answer her eyes came back to the man with his reeled-in rod in one hand and his cap and half-eaten tomato in the other, and with the clear survey of those brown eyes, the man instantly felt horribly conscious of each drop of perspiration that was trickling from his ministerial forehead to his collarless neck; of the hole the barbed wire had made in his stocking; of the tomato in his hand. But even while this consciousness struck him with dismay, he saw laughter light the brown eyes, though it did not spread to the mouth.

"May I offer you some salt?" she asked, casually proffering a folded slip of paper. "I have just finished eating a tomato."

"Thank you," he answered. "It does taste better so."

'As she did not rise, he laid down his rod.

"May I sit down?" he said.

"Do. Where is Sleipnir, Odin?"

The rector had to take an instant to recall whether Sleipnir was Odin's servant or his horse. Deciding in favor of the horse, he answered:

"In the stable having his other four legs pinned on. Odin's nag was eight-legged, was he not?"

"He was, and he liked salt."

"You come prepared," he said.

"Not for everything." And she laughed softly.

The man hastily mopped his forehead.

"Did I take tomatoes from your patch?" he asked.

"It is not mine," she said. "Perhaps it is your tomato patch?"

Thorne shook his head.

"No — no, it isn't mine."

Then he looked down at her and the look dilated on two opinions. Who could she be? This girl who mixed Norse mythology with roadside depredations! Suddenly aware that he ought to say something to counteract the effect of his astonished look at her, he finally brought forth:

"Did — did you — are you going to stew these?"

"No," she answered gravely. "We had them stewed yesterday. I shall bake these."

He looked about at the patch.

"Do you come for them every day?" he asked.

There was nothing more in his voice, even to an ear strained to catch the slightest disrespect, than a moderate curiosity.

"No," she answered. "We can not endure tomatoes every day. I come for them every other day, and then I have to fix them different ways to make them palatable."

Still bereft of ideas for the prolongation of the conversation, the man seized on a forlorn hope.

"Are there so many ways? I imagined there were only two or three."

"There are ten. You know nothing of tomatoes."

"Oh!" said Thorne.

Her brown eyes met his own squarely.

"You would like to ask me why I do not buy tomatoes? It is because I have no money to spare for them — nor for apples."

"But —"

"Yes — I know, but you ate two of them as you came through the patch."

"So I did," said Thorne.

She raised her basket from the ground, and with a bend of the head that had a certain stateliness, she said good-by. Thorne watched her move down the pathway to the culvert, wondering if many centuries of women educated to please were not behind this girl

who could climb a fence with an inimitable turn of wrist and ankle, and carry off a basket of neglected tomatoes with a grace our present world is too hurried to acquire.

He threw himself down under the tree where she had been and lighted his pipe, yet as he smoked it was not brown eyes that Wrexford Thorne saw, but long blue eyes, quiet as the blue water is quiet on a windless day — a brooding quiet over depths held in leash. In the day of storm would they be so tired and so quiet under their down-curved passionate lids?

Meantime the girl, after a half-mile walk along the river road, took a pathway that cut across fields and up a hill to a little cottage among a grove of maples where she lived. She paused at the gateway to look at the tall and very good-looking young man who sat upon her porch, so absorbed he had not seen her approach. He was immaculate in white flannels, and at this moment of grave silence he was strikingly like the man she had left at the tomato patch.

"I thought so from the first moment," said the girl to herself. "It was his brother, the rector." She gave her tomatoes a dubious look. "And a professionally good man," she added and shook her head.

Then she looked up at the quiet man, and she laughed softly.

"Please, sir," she said aloud, "is the lady of the house home?"

He rose swiftly and came to her.

"There is at times," he answered, "a scarlet and brown girl-woman here, but she is very elusive. She is not like other women. I think she is a dryad. She goes about the country watching her woods, and her trees, and her flowers, and then when you are looking for her in the open she is suddenly to be found sweeping, and garnishing, and creating a home. She is quite marvelously made for a lady of the house, but she is also made for things more intangible, like friendship and inspiration; and the combination is not to be found but once or twice in a man's life. I think, some day, some very needy man will ask help of her in his living."

She swept him a curious look.

"But before he does" — and the man's voice deepened — "do you not think the man should find out if there is anything he can give to her in return for all she could give — if there is anything she needs — for you see she is self-supporting — so there is no need of that kind of help from a man for her — and she is resourceful. Perhaps you could tell me what women dryads need?"

But the girl's raillery had fled, and with it some of her color.

"What do all women need, no matter how resourceful they are?" she said. "Are their needs so different from men's?"

"I think," he answered slowly, "that you could not put the question in that way if you had not been brought up by a man."

She took instant refuge from his ambiguity in the thought of her father that he had brought into the conversation.

"I want to speak to you about my father," she said. "Will you tell me what your plan is? I know, of course, that you have some plan in the matter, that you are interested in him as a case; that you are watching him; that you have formed some kind of idea—" She hesitated and the doctor answered at once.

"This afternoon I came to talk with you about your father, with the hope that I might find you alone a few minutes. That is why I waited when I found nobody here."

He turned and walked with her back to the porch, and they sat down. The doctor realized that he had been deftly turned from the personal question that was arising between them, but it had its attraction for him. The women he met were not often disposed to turn aside personalities.

"Two years ago in Lucerne," he continued, "when

I first met your father, his case presented peculiarities that even then made me wonder if there were not some other reason for his ill-health than the one he believed in. Of course, such conditions often follow the nervous shock caused by these frightful accidents, and they are frequently classed as nervous, yet I felt so sure that there was something else, that when your father told me last week that he had been hit on the head at the time of the wreck I came near saying 'I told you so.' He insisted that the blow had caused him but a brief local discomfort, and that he had scarcely thought of it again until I inquired.

"Last Sunday morning, you remember, I took your father out in my machine. I spent my first half-hour in such persuasion as I could muster, and then I drove him to the Port Madison Hospital where they have just installed an X-ray apparatus. I begged him to let me prove to myself, for the sake of my own peace of mind, whether or not I was right. He did not believe me, but he let me use the X-ray on his head. It shows only the bone, of course, but there is a small splinter of bone from the inner table of the skull that needs to be lifted from its pressure on the brain.

"The operation indicated — trephining — is not a difficult one, but for some time your father has been subject to brief periods of unconsciousness that point to a condition on which I should like consultation.

You see, this fracture has existed a long time, and it makes of it a slightly different matter than if it had been repaired at once. I think I can get your father's permission to have a consultation, and to operate — perhaps here at the Memorial Hospital if I can surmount two difficulties: his objection to the acceptance as a gift of the expense attached to these things; and his anxiety as to your welfare during the time he is in the hospital. He does not think that you could stay here alone."

The girl thought a moment.

"If he should recover his health and be able to earn his living again there is no need of his accepting the money as a gift," she said. "It could be a loan. But, of course, there is the chance — of his not — recovering. The second difficulty is trivial compared with what you are trying to do. I can stay here alone, or if he does not need me I can work."

The man had his own wish to contend with, and he held back its expression with difficulty. Not while what he could do for her or her father might seem to be offered for a price, could he ask a gift of her. Yet the temptation to offer her the utmost aid of all he owned and had was great, and he hurried into speech to avoid it.

"Have you thought of Mrs. Carson?" he asked.

He felt himself inexcusably awkward in his man-

ner of bringing in Mrs. Carson's name as a bulwark to his own restraint.

At the embarrassment in his voice the girl gave him a curious look.

"I saw you driving with Mrs. Carson on the coast road several weeks ago. I do not think I should have recognized you, but you stopped your machine to talk. You seemed very earnest. I—I have wondered a little—she is very lovely—"

She paused, suddenly realizing that she could not voice her thought.

The man did not belittle Mrs. Carson with any explanation for being seen with her, and the girl continued:

"She came to see us a little while after I had seen her with you—came as a man would come, pushing aside personal prejudice; but as no man could have done, looking straight into the heart of our needs and of our capabilities. She brought hope with her, opposing it to my father's prejudice against anything that bears the name of Carson. It was his first hope in all these hard months. She offered him not only a means of livelihood, but the chance of once more handling large affairs; of doing a thing he can do well; of returning to his old life and his old friendships. At that time he did not believe he would ever be well enough to accept, but you have added to this

hope the one of recovery of his strength. I think if the two things could be made to join he could give both you and Mrs. Carson but one answer."

"Do you know if your father has any special reason for his dislike of Colin Carson — other than the kind of man he was?"

"It is connected with some case, compromised out of court, a case in which Mr. Carson and his former guardian, John Harding, were involved — a marriage, proved to be no marriage. I do not know the details. But I recall, at the time of Mrs. Carson's marriage, my father's protest to her. But she took no advice."

"Do you like her?" the man asked.

"Yes."

"It does not seem to me that you ought to stay here alone. If she came here — while your father —"

"But she is the most sought-after woman in her world."

"It is true, but there are other things that she is also; persuasive for instance, capable of taking infinite pains where she is interested, executive —" The doctor paused, struck by a sudden thought. "Did you happen to tell her that you knew me?" he asked.

"I happened to tell her, when she said she had not seen me since I had grown up, that I had seen her with you but a little while before."

The doctor turned on his conception of Mrs. Car-

son a new light. As with Judge Wallace, Mrs. Carson had been almost masculine in her fixing on those things in himself she had need of; passing over the personal difficulties between them that usually loom large to women. Had she also been divinely feminine, foreseeing the possibilities in the task she had set him?

The doctor rose.

"I should like to bring my brother to meet you and your father. May I do so to-morrow?"

The doctor would have had to look closer than he did to have found the sudden flicker of mirth the girl hid behind lowered lids.

"Will you both come to dinner with us to-morrow?" she asked.

He hesitated over the possible trouble guests might cause her and then, finding his hesitation ungracious, he answered: "We shall be glad to come."

The girl watched him as he descended the hill to the road, and her eyes were wistful.

CHAPTER VI

"Of cabbages and kings."

WREXFORD THORNE sauntered down the road under the early afternoon sun, in his ears the sound of the voice he had once likened to the sun on wine-red velvet. It had come over the miles of intervening space with instant assent to the request he had made that morning in his brother's name, on behalf of Judge Wallace and his daughter. She would arrive that night and she would bring with her Doctor Langdon, the surgeon Doctor Thorne had asked to have in consultation. And Wrexford Thorne, declining to examine the unrest that was possessing him or even to call it by name, had concluded to try again the fortunes of the abandoned tomato patch.

If they ate tomatoes every other day, this was the day.

He seated himself on the root of a giant sycamore that crawled out over the creek and gave him a view of the tomato patch and the cabbage field beyond it. When Amy Wallace came upon him, he was fashion-

ing a cup out of a huge sycamore leaf. If she was surprised, she did not betray it.

"Good afternoon, Tree-Dryad," he said. "Did you step out of the sycamore?"

"Yes, Odin. Because you are using my leaves."

"It is so fortunate," said Thorne, after a swift glance at her, "that sycamores grow near the water. Their leaves are ideal for cups."

He dipped his leafy cup into the creek and offered it to her. While she drank, he moved over on the root of the tree. "Will you not sit down?" he asked.

She visibly hesitated, but he did not appear to see. Instead, he bent over the creek again and scooping more water into the leaf, he drank it. Before he had finished, she was seated near him and, leaning against the trunk of the tree, she laughed at him.

"Do you believe in friendship at first sight?" said Thorne.

The girl considered. "Perhaps it is a matter of refinement. Some place I have heard that fine senses vibrate immediately to congenialities it may take long to verify, but who am I to talk of friendship with a specialist?"

Thorne straightened up suddenly.

"Why do you call me that?" he asked.

"Surely a man who includes in his 'Dearly Be-

loved', hundreds of young women, and who is weekly reported betrothed to a different débutante, must be classed as a specialist in friendliness."

Thorne stared at her. He could think of nothing better to reply than: "You know me?"

"I should not be sitting here with you if I did not." Then, with faint malice: "Running the risk of being caught stealing tomatoes."

Thorne felt a primitive desire to take those charming shoulders that had just shrugged a rebuff and shake them. "You insolent young thing!" he said.

"I suppose you forgive my insolence because of my youth." She rose. "I have to have a cabbage," she added.

Thorne looked at her blankly.

"I have to have a cabbage," she repeated. "We are having a guest for dinner, and I must have a salad."

She moved to the barb-wired fence beyond which rows of close-folded cabbages gleamed in the hot afternoon sunshine.

Thorne sprang to his feet.

"No," he said, almost subconsciously. Then his troubled eyes lighted with sudden relief on the wire fence that separated the cabbages from the lawless girl beside him. "You can not climb that fence for a cabbage."

She lifted her brown eyes with another of her laughing glances at him.

"No, but you can."

There was a brief pause while Thorne looked at her with no sensation beyond astonishment.

"I am sure you are only in fun."

A faint disdain swept over her face. "How does it feel," she said, "to be afraid?"

He did not even hesitate. Grasping the wooden post he swung himself over the fence with a suppleness one would not have expected of his height and breadth. The girl let him reach the other side. Then panic seized her.

She looked at him across the barbed wire.

"No," she said, "no, I do not want it. But I thank you very much. Good-by."

Thorne watched her until she disappeared under the culvert. Then he looked down on the cabbages, and laughter shook him.

"'Men do not despise a thief if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry,'" he quoted. "'But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold.' I have about found myself. Let us see if I can buy cabbages?"

It was an hour later that a woman in gray-blue, with blue corn-flowers on her hat, suddenly leaned from an automobile that was taking a leisurely way along the coast road. Above the woman's eyes, as

blue as the corn-flowers, her brows knotted. For down a path, leading from a small farm-house to the main road, came Wrexford Thorne, with his arms full of cabbages.

"Stop the car, Hayes," said Mrs. Carson, "just around that curve. Doctor Langdon, will you mind waiting a moment? I think I see Doctor Thorne's brother crossing the field. I will have him ride the rest of the way with us."

She left the automobile and disappeared around the curve of the road.

The famous surgeon minded nothing. He was at her disposal for a large price, and he had known her for some years; ever since he had been on the committee to pass on her husband's sanity. He knew that she went on her own errands only when they were important to her, and that she executed them with despatch. He took out a very good cigar and considered the three men she had mentioned in the affair, all of whom he knew, without coming to any conclusion as to which one had caused Mrs. Carson to set out on the road to Jericho.

Wrexford Thorne had crossed the field, and was on the other side of the barbed fence. He had laid his cabbages where he could reach them by the time that Mrs. Carson arrived at the giant sycamore. She stopped and watched him swing himself over the

fence, gather up his cabbages, and begin to place them on trailing tomato vines they were surely never meant to adorn. The hot sun moistened his forehead and crisped his hair into curling wisps under his cap. His pale blue shirt clung to his damp shoulders, and he chuckled like a boy planning foolish things. When he had finished he addressed the cabbages aloud.

"You'll keep," he said. "You'll be perfectly good to eat next week."

He turned away, still chuckling. Then suddenly he paused and, standing quite still, he passed his hand several times over his eyes as if he could not trust their story. Then he spoke aloud again.

"I am sunstruck, and because I have thought of her incessantly in the blue dress and hat, because she is coming to-day —"

Then his face, that had been brightly flushed over his work, paled and grew still, for he beheld no fancy of a sun-heated brain but a woman flushing under his look and his words: breathless, astounded, alluring. So the two stood gazing at each other, a long still look, and the man knew but the need of restraint; the woman but the need of expression.

"Are you grafting cabbages on tomatoes?" she asked in the low voice that had been in his ears all day. "Or are you playing store? Oh, what are you doing?"

He came back from his moment of revelation more slowly than she had done. He turned and looked at his work.

"I was trying effects," he said. "The two colors look well together, don't you think?"

She did not press for an explanation, knowing that if a question is deliberately left unanswered one might as well consider it answered.

"I have Doctor Langdon with me, and the machine is waiting on the road. Will you come back with us?"

"Yes."

"When does your brother want Doctor Langdon to see Judge Wallace?" said Mrs. Carson as they approached the road.

"This evening, when our dinner with the judge and Miss Amy is over, Carleton will come after him and they will call on the judge and talk with him a while. I think their real consultation is for to-morrow morning."

Nadine nodded.

"And you?" said Thorne, with a quick look at her.

"I shall take advantage of my sex, and look after Miss Amy. It is a little new for me to have a girl to chaperon; so I shall spend to-night thinking how I may bring it about and what I shall do when I have brought it about."

CHAPTER VII

"A little rest — life wearies so
For love that lightens."

AMY WALLACE gave the last touch to the wild flowers on her table, and laughing at the tomatoes waiting for the mayonnaise she had been making, she went to the door to look for her father. Worrying ceaselessly over what Carleton Thorne had told her yesterday about her father, Amy had hoped he would not insist on his usual trip to Port Madison for the mail; especially since, because of her dinner guests, she could not go with him. But he would not be denied.

There was no glimpse of the tall figure that usually came so slowly up the hill, and Amy turned into her tiny bedroom to put on the white linen dress she had ironed earlier in the day in honor of her simple dinner.

She saw the two brothers coming up the hill as she passed from her room to the kitchen to look at the rolls she was baking, and a little thrill of excitement stained her cheeks.

Carleton Thorne had walked the short distance be-

tween the Jossus farm and the little cottage in absorbed silence, and his brother, to whom respect for another's mood seemed the foundation of comradeship, had been equally silent.

On the porch of the cottage they waited. A white-gowned girl with scarlet cheeks moved down the little hallway, and held out her hand to Carleton Thorne, smiling. As she did so, Wrexford Thorne leaned forward staring at her as if he could not believe his eyes. In his ears rang a laughing voice demanding cabbage for a dinner guest and before his eyes swept the vision of her, from the moment he had first seen her, climbing the orchard fence, to the picture of the cabbage-studded tomato patch that would doubtless confront her—the next time they were to eat tomatoes! It was incredible! Even as his brother presented him, Wrexford Thorne found himself waiting for his cue. It came at once. Having been bred by a man, she did not impose discretion on any man on her account.

"You see how it happened that I knew you, Odin. Are Sleipnir's other four legs staying pinned on?" Then to Carleton Thorne:

"Your brother helped me gather the tomatoes he is to eat for his dinner to-night—but he declined cabbage. Has he told you?"

"No," said Carleton Thorne.

"You will tell him, will you not, while I serve dinner? I am expecting father every minute. He is late. But meantime it would embarrass me frightfully if my dinner spoiled." She gave the rector a level glance of suppressed laughter, and he leaned up against the door as she left them and chuckled aloud.

"Well, upon my word," he exclaimed lamely, when he could catch his breath.

"Suppose," said Carleton Thorne, now thoroughly angry, "that you explain it to me."

"Explain what to you?" said his brother. "That I have come across Miss Wallace three different times without having any idea who she was?"

"But you evidently talked with her, even if you did not know who she was."

"Yes, and I shall talk with her again, I hope. But who would have thought *she* would be Miss Wallace?"

Carleton Thorne came closer.

"Rex," he said, "this is the girl that I hope to make my wife."

Wrexford Thorne gave his brother's angry face a quick look.

"You will be most fortunate if you do," he answered.

"I wish you success from the bottom of my heart. As for this — it is merely funny — nothing more."

If the doctor had a rejoinder it was stopped by the girl's return to the porch.

"Gentlemen," she said, "my dinner is ready, but my careless father has not come. I have never known him to do this before. He is punctilious beyond belief. He intended to be here a half-hour ago." She caught the doctor's eye, and a shade passed over her face. "You do not think — oh, I begged him not to go alone! But he has been expecting a small check, and he hoped —"

"It is only a short walk," said the doctor. "When did he start?"

"About an hour ago. But he often stops to rest at the beach before he starts up the hill. Perhaps —"

The doctor hesitated a moment.

"I think," he said at length, "that I will go after him."

The girl's face whitened a little.

"I will go with you, please. I could not stay here — waiting. Will you have coffee before we go? It is ready — waiting — and perhaps he will come."

They waited a few minutes longer drinking the coffee she brought them, but there was no sight of Judge Wallace when they started down the pathway to the road.

Nadine Carson, meantime, after her fashion of taking her questions out under the sky for answer, left the farm-house and walked down the road, hunting for some pathway to the shore.

She found one that stole between the shelved rocks, at the side of the road, toward a tiny beach walled in by shallow cliffs, and as she neared the sand she saw Judge Wallace ahead of her, seated on a low shelf of rock with his head resting on his arm. She paused, looking at the tired pose of the tall figure with its fine head and that quality his daughter also had, that even in repose signified breeding more than a century old.

And watching him her curved brows came closer to each other, and her lips pressed themselves into a narrow line. It utterly removed from her face its appealing femininity. She looked cold, and clear, and thoughtful.

This was the only being in the world who had told her that marriage with Colin Carson would be shame and misery for her ; and she had not been old enough to believe such words could mean what they did when they summed up marriage. This man alone had tried to stop her, and in no way had she been able to repay the debt. She came to him slowly, and seeing her he rose hesitatingly, as if the effort were too much for his strength.

"Let me sit down beside you, instead," she said in

her low cool voice. "I want to speak to you a moment."

Preoccupied as she was, it did not occur to her as curious that he should be resting here when his dinner guests had already gone to his house. As he assented, she gave a swift look behind the quiet gravity of his face to the pain and weariness hidden there.

"You have just come?" he said.

"Yes. I came to see you. But first I want to speak to you a moment about myself, if you will let me."

His face, white and drawn, took on a watchful look — a call on his vitality that seemed to bring new fatigue, for he leaned his head back on the rock again.

"You will recall," said Nadine gently, "that I grew up dependent in the home of distant connections — neither father nor mother. You also recall the kind of home it was. There were no men in it, either as companions or guardians. There was a mother, frankly bent on social achievement, on placing her three daughters; a little reluctant to give much to the outsider I really was. It was a life whose aridity no man could appreciate. I was denied all practical education by which I could have achieved independence, and while too young to know the value of independence, I was told almost hourly that a fortunate marriage was my one chance. There were no ideals in

that household either of friendship or love or kindness — nothing save a worship of success in every little form it could take. And I was not permitted to interfere in anyway with any success the other three girls might achieve.

“Then came Colin Carson, whose life had been spent gaining what he wanted for the asking. He was, in those days, handsome in a way. There was no chance for a girl in my position to know the man’s manner of living or its results. He came seeking to please, quiet enough, with a touch of eccentricity, that might well seem to a young girl attractive originality. And he passed over the other girls and chose me — demanded me — the more because of my instinctive reluctance. He was not used to being rebuffed by women.

“I heard only envy of my opportunity from those about me. I was told ceaselessly that this was good fortune beyond all my deserts — for I had not lived my dependent life without rebellion and protest. As the possible wife of a multimillionaire I suddenly became a human being in the house where I lived. I was utterly unguarded, unformed, unwise with that terrible ignorance of the undeveloped girl. Against all these influences only one voice was raised — yours.

“In the after months, when I found that the marriage I had made was not independence but a ter-

rorized slavery; when I paid for my luxury with despair; when I learned what marriage might be, and what I had irretrievably missed, as a woman, when I gave up the chance of love and of children for money, for a horrible life with a half-mad creature who was yet my husband; you must believe that I thought often of you — of this one voice I might have heeded. That is why I have always kept a watch on you. My debt to you is unpaid. For a little hour or two you were my friend.

“I think you can not approve of the woman I grew into; yet, perhaps, you can see that somehow I must have set forth to other ways of living, and that first I must find values — the things that do not count as well as the things that do. This hideous weight of money belonging to a man I have far more cause to hate than you — do you think I like it any better than you do? But it is here. It must be managed wisely. I am responsible for it. Is it so strange to you that I should ask you to bear your share of this responsibility — you who are the only relative of the Carson family left?

“And the other thing I ask of you; it is not to let me do for your daughter what you yourself could do, only what no man can do for a girl — to make things easier for her in a woman’s way until you are well and able to arrange her life on a larger plan than

it can now attain. I think you hesitate over allowing me to relieve a little of my own burden by measuring it with yours, because of the kind of woman you suppose me to be. Yet you will find in my life nothing that unfits me to companion a girl.

"Do you think I do not know what you yourself have endured these last years? It is because I have borne pain, and weariness, and despair, and hidden them, that I do know. Will you not give me the same understanding? You and I have but taken different ways of hiding our hurt for our pride's sake. You alone here with your woods and your ocean, I alone in my swirling man-filled cities."

She paused, her luminous blue eyes still looking beyond his drawn face into whatever it was that made up the man himself; and from this he answered her.

"I shall be glad of your friendship for myself and for Amy — glad to do what I can to keep it — to be helped by you — if — you — will."

And as he spoke the drawn look grew suddenly less tense, and his face, from pallor, took on an ashen tinge, and but for her arms he would have fallen.

They found them as the dusk gathered round the cliff-bound beach — Nadine kneeling beside the unconscious man, trying to revive him. As the three reached them, she looked up.

"He has only been this way a few minutes. He seemed to be resting here on his way home, and we talked together — we made friends — but I think, perhaps, he must have been here some time, and that he would not tell me how ill he was, when I came upon him."

She stood aside to let Carleton Thorne take her place, and when at length he shook his head, she took Amy by the arm as the two men lifted her father.

"It is not an ordinary loss of consciousness," said the doctor to Amy. "But you must not be afraid. We will take him to the farm. It is nearest, and Doctor Langdon is there. Perhaps you will go on ahead and tell them we are coming."

To those who watched it seemed an intolerable time that the two doctors worked with the man who lay on Carleton Thorne's bed. Apparently there was no result from their work. With a sinking heart Amy saw them finally relax their efforts, and speak with each other in low tones. She caught a phrase here and there that strung her to attention — hemorrhage — and again meningeal hemorrhage — probably epidural.

She saw them examine pupil and pulse; she saw Carleton Thorne pass light fingers over her father's head, calling Doctor Langdon's attention to a certain spot, and again they spoke together in low-voiced con-

sultation and presently she heard them talking to her. They spoke to her of a probable small cyst resulting from the bone pressure; of hemorrhage that must be immediately arrested; of an emergency operation at once, as soon as her father could be prepared and the room made ready.

Carleton Thorne came to her side, and spoke gently.

"If the hemorrhage is epidural, and by this I mean between the skull and the outermost membranous envelope of the brain, there is every chance of your father's recovery. If it is subdural — beneath the dura — there is still a large chance. If we do not operate at once he will possibly pass from unconsciousness — to death."

Amy's eyes dwelt a moment on her father's still face, and then passed to Carleton Thorne.

"You will do it then, at once?"

"Yes," he answered quietly. "And now we shall want many things. We shall want things done quickly here in the house and other things sent for from the Port Madison Hospital. Mrs. Carson, will you let Rex use your chauffeur and your machine? I shall send him for a list of things I shall make out, and the best operative nurse the hospital will give him. Rex, the surgeon of the hospital must verify the presence in the machine of every article that I am sending for, and you must telephone before you leave. Mrs. Car-

son, and Miss Jossus, and Miss Amy will help us prepare our patient and the room. We have, fortunately, electric light. There is but a minimum chance of accident to your machine, Mrs. Carson?"

"Hayes, my man, is absolutely reliable and expert at quick repair."

"Very well. Doctor Langdon will telephone the hospital, and they will be ready for you, Rex."

Swiftly and quietly, with that beautiful care that only skilled surgeons know, the preparations for the grim fight with death went forward. The room became gradually bare of everything that could be taken out — a white-sheeted operating room, inhabited by a still figure about which moved watchful men and women on their errands of preparation, sterilization, arrangement.

In an incredibly short time Wrexford Thorne had returned.

For a moment before he made his final personal preparations, Carleton Thorne spoke with Amy Wallace, but none other heard what he said.

The night wore on. Outside the door the two women waited. Miss Jossus, while she had a task to accomplish, could endure the tension; but the long wait was beyond her, and she had gone down-stairs in tears. Wrexford Thorne was a familiar figure in these quiet battles of the operating table, and he re-

mained with the doctors to be of such service as he could.

Afterward when Amy recalled these long frightful minutes of doubt she wondered if she could have endured them but for the presence of Nadine whose brooding quiet, for all its silence, surrounded her with consideration.

And presently Carleton Thorne opened the door softly — a different Carleton Thorne from any she had ever seen, white with dark rings under his eyes; with the fatigue of unbearable tension in his face. Yet in the look he gave the girl there was a divine hope — and an infolding tenderness.

Amy went to him with a little sob, and he took her into the room where her father lay.

Nadine turned to the window, and leaned out into the starlit night.

And this look with which Carleton Thorne had brought the girl to his side, the yearning tenderness of the man who has fought for the woman well-loved and won, knocked at her heart with a burden of new pain. This was the birthright she had sold for the pottage of her gold-showered life. This was love; need, and service, and faith, and honor, and kindness. And without it mere living was a little thing.

The door closed softly again, and Wrexford Thorne stood beside her. Need — she had needed him.

Service — he had given it. Honor — one fought for honor; it was not given unasked. But love must be built upon it. She saw it with blinding clearness.

Was this love that was coming to her, this pain that besought and swayed her, built on new things of the spirit she had not dreamed of in these years of struggle and defeat? If this was love it brought no rest and no joy, but a grim need for struggle, sterner than any fight she had ever fought.

The man was speaking, and she brought herself back to his words.

"They think it has been a success beyond their hopes. The condition had gone on so long — it was not as if they had operated at the beginning. But they believe he will waken normal, his mind clearer, with only his strength to regain. And Miss Amy —"

He paused and Nadine concluded.

"Miss Amy," she said, "when her father is better, will come to me for a little while. Almost the last thing her father said before you found us was that I might do these things for her. We shall immerse ourselves in chiffons; the one diversion that takes no strength, and is a rest after strain. We shall fuss with laces and Things-From-The-Street-Of-Peace, made for trousseaux. For I think we shall have a real wedding, do not you?"

"I think so," said the man looking at her. "Was

that also in your mind when you asked for help on your road to Jericho?"

"I—do not know," said Nadine faintly. "I—I thought—dimly of—love."

The man looked down at her in silence.

CHAPTER VIII

"So went
Thy spell through him,
And left his straight neck bent."

IN the days that followed, Nadine thought often of love; thought of it as she had never been able to see it before; as she had never imagined it could be. Love that was thoughtful and kind; love that waited with patience and tenderness for its time to come; love that asked only to give, searching for new ways to expend itself — Nadine had scarcely believed it to be in the world.

Under Carleton Thorne's ceaseless watching, Judge Wallace improved in great strides, advancing to a normal convalescence with rapidity and success. Everything about the house lent itself to his recovery. Miss Jossus expended herself in behalf of her guests. Nadine, who had come for only a few days, remained that she might keep watch on all their needs. She moved about her arrangements so quietly the others scarcely knew how well and how carefully they were made. She worked with Miss Jossus over the judge's comfort. She planned with the doctor the events of

his convalescence, and she shared with Wrexford Thorne the execution of the plans.

Sometimes she drove with the rector to the hospital for the things the nurses needed; sometimes they rode together, long delightful hours in the saddle, that left Amy alone with her father and Carleton Thorne. They would return to find Judge Wallace sleeping, and Amy and the doctor together on the up-stairs veranda,—their joy in each other apparent even to a casual onlooker.

To Nadine these weeks began to seem the happiest she had spent in all her life. They were filled to the brim with the simplest of things: sweet bright mornings and soft quiet evenings, pleasant and kindly meetings, gentle laughter — things Nadine had small knowledge of and that yet seemed to hold the nearest promise this world gives of the peace that passeth understanding.

The day came at length when Judge Wallace was able to come down-stairs to dinner. They made a festival of it. Amy walked through the woods to the deserted cottage where she had spent so many hard months with her father, to get his evening clothes for him and the one evening gown she had left from earlier years of plenty.

As she came out of the house, she found Carleton Thorne on the porch.

"You should have told me you were coming," he said. "If I had not followed you, you would have had to carry that heavy box. Henceforth I am the proper burden bearer."

He took the box she held from her, put it on a bench and stood looking at her a moment. Under his look, the girl fell to trembling.

"Amy," he said, "your father is well. In a little while, a few weeks at most, he will take up his new work for Mrs. Carson, work that will bring him a large income, and bring you back to those things with which you filled your life before I knew you.

"I wanted to wait until all this had come about before I intruded myself on your new plans. But I can not. These days I have spent with you have been more than I could endure. You will never know how wonderful you have been through these difficult hours; you will never know how hard it has been to keep from telling you — that I loved you. I do love you, Amy.

"I have loved you a long, long while, since those first days in Italy, I think. I have wanted to marry you for so long that it seems I have always wanted it. Yet now I have scarcely a word to tell you even what it means to me."

He paused, and leaning toward her suddenly caught her hands into a close clasp.

"Amy," he said, "I love you. Will you marry me?"

The single syllable with which she answered him was so low it would seem that nobody but a lover could have heard it. Carleton Thorne looked at her a moment longer; then he took her in his arms.

When they returned to the farm-house, they found Nadine arranging the flowers on the dinner-table. Behind her in the doorway stood Wrexford Thorne, his hands in his pockets, watching her. She talked to him softly as her fingers strayed among the flowers.

"We shall go to Belle Terre, I think, when Judge Wallace is quite able to go. The only relative that Amy has, lives just across the bay from Belle Terre at Cressler. It is Mrs. Cressler-Wallace. Perhaps you recall her. She is a great friend of all the Jeffreys. She has been abroad a long time and now wants to be of some use to Amy. There is really nothing she can do, but it will be nice for Amy to be near her, and Belle Terre is convenient for me and near enough to town for the judge to go in and out when he begins on his new work. We shall have a good many papers to go over together, and a good many plans to perfect. The judge will have to go into all of Harding's previous arrangements and I shall have to help him. And Amy—" she paused, and met Wrexford Thorne's eyes.

A long quiet look passed between them, the look of a man and woman who are so closely attuned that there is small need of speech between them.

Carleton Thorne, in the hall outside, watched them — his brother, grave-eyed and intent — Nadine, still and brooding. He sighed. The least little thing, and all this quiet content with each other would flame into deep need. And then? Carleton Thorne turned away as from the heavy edge of tragedy. A thing like this for his brother! Who would have believed these two would come so close; would find themselves so well-mated; would meet in so narrow a place with that great love power, propinquity, hovering about them, in long days of helpfulness and kindly thought of others?

The doctor felt that he might have known, had he had other thoughts than of his own pressing matters, that this might easily be the one rare occasion when Nadine Carson would be at her best, when Rex could see this best every hour of the day — and seeing it — what? Not even the doctor could say. Rex had the power of poised self-control. It might be he would escape even knowledge of this dangerous country so close to his unconscious feet. Carleton turned toward Amy with finger on lip, but she had left him after one glance at Nadine, and gone to her father.

A half-hour later Nadine came into Amy's room.

"Amy," she said, "I have made Miss Jossus let Claudia do her hair, and cut out the neck of her black satin gown. You will be astonished at the change. She looks fifteen years younger and absolutely distinguished."

Amy smiled at her. Her own toilet was complete, and to Nadine she seemed very sweet and girlish in her simple white gown, with that new look in her eyes that Nadine was beginning to recognize.

"You are a real builder, Nadine," said Amy. "You ought to be at the head of some big corporation."

Nadine drew her dressing-gown across her shoulders, shivering a little.

"The Carson estate, Amy, requires almost as much executive ability. Do you imagine the control of all of this money and the wise disbursement of it is child's play? It is so exacting a task that if I were not going to have your father help me at it, I should have time for nothing else. Where is your father now, dear?"

"He is down-stairs, dressed in the most immaculate evening clothes, talking over a somewhat important matter with — with the doctor."

"Then I must hurry," said Nadine. She gave Amy a fleeting look of inquiry, smiled a little and went back to her own room, where Claudia put her deftly

into a soft tulle gown of a paler blue than she usually wore.

"Will you wear jewels, Mrs. Carson?" asked Clauda.

"No, Clauda." Nadine stared absently at herself in the mirror.

"A little rouge, Mrs. Carson?"

Nadine swept her white face and bare shoulders a swift glance. They were like a delicately cut cameo with the pale blue tulle below them.

"No," she said. "This is not my party. I am mere background."

The maid's observant eyes rested a moment on the slender figure in its trailing gown, and then she turned away smiling.

As Nadine crossed the drawing-room to welcome and congratulate Judge Wallace, Wrexford Thorne drew a little way from his brother with a sudden sharp movement. This was not quite the woman who had been companioning him through all these days that had been so uneventful and yet so full. It was not even the woman, who a half-hour ago, had moved about the dinner-table with pleasant domesticity. This was Mrs. Colin Carson, for whom all social doors swung wide, whose grace and wealth and beauty marked her for a world in which these things mean leadership. He had a dull sense of loss. In a few

days she would go back to this world and if he saw her again, it would be only now and then,—brief glimpses of her, snatched from an absorbing life, long days between the glimpses.

It came to him swiftly that it must have taken much quiet arrangement before such a woman could give up several weeks to others in the way she had done. It would, perhaps, never happen again that he and she would be able to spend hour after hour with each other. His dull sense of loss became an aching unrest. How naturally they had spent these hours with each other! How gently the gift of intimacy had descended on them!

Nadine turned toward him, and he could almost have believed she knew what he was feeling and thinking, so full of understanding was the look she gave him. He saw her eyes narrow as if she were trying to reduce him to a proportionate place in a picture where he loomed overlarge, and gladness came over him that she seemed unable to do it. The truth was, that in his evening clothes, his straight figure with its beautiful symmetry and strong lines could not be reduced to a proportionate place. It dominated any room in which he stood.

When Miss Jossus came in to announce dinner, she was greeted with such gay exclaiming over her al-

tered appearance that she almost forgot what she had come for. Indeed, there was nothing in the little party to suggest that it was assembled in celebration of victory over pain and death.

Carleton Thorne looked on his discharged patient joyously.

"Is he not wonderful? My dear Judge, I am constrained to compliment the life you have led. It has prepared you for swift recuperation."

"Your compliments, Doctor, should be bestowed, rather on the life you have led yourself, that prepared you to take advantage of my small resources."

"More than that. I fear I have taken every advantage possible," said Carleton Thorne, his eyes meeting Amy's and his voice growing grave. "This being a dinner of congratulation and thanksgiving, I will ask the judge to announce—" he paused and Judge Wallace filled in the pause.

"To announce the engagement of my daughter, Amy Cressler Wallace, to Doctor Carleton Thorne."

He lifted his glass. "To their happiness," he concluded.

Wrexford Thorne turned to his brother and for a moment the two men held each other in a close hand clasp. Holding his brother's hand, the rector turned to Amy.

"I think you know how glad I am," he said simply,

"and how I hope that there will be nothing but happiness in store for you."

Miss Jossus turned in her chair and stealthily wiped her eyes before she put her congratulations into words.

Nadine's face whitened a little, as she watched them. She had a sudden sharp recollection of the announcement of her own engagement, an engagement built on the tragic ignorance of a young girl — an ignorance that Amy Wallace, in close companionship with her father, had escaped. She mused on it, as the kind wishes flashed about the table. Even as a girl she had the nascent power of comprehending what marriage might become if it meant companionship with one beloved. And she had let this comprehension be belittled and denied. If she had waited! At some time these things that were coming to Amy Wallace must have come into her life, and she could have taken them as a girl, untouched by all the memories that were now assailing her.

She looked up at Wrexford Thorne with that sudden clearer vision that sometimes overtakes a woman when she is brought close to the hidden deeper things in other lives and forced to measure her own life with them. Wrexford Thorne was watching his brother, and Nadine had a few moments in which to scan each feature of his face for the meaning beneath.

The brow was broad with a clear pallor of skin; the eyes were the gray-green of the enthusiast and set in dark rims with lids whose curve held a pride that was almost arrogance. The nose was straight and strong; the jaw powerful, with a faint suggestion of cleft in the chin. The mouth held Nadine even longer than the eyes; its contradictions were not so easily discerned. The man turned his head away from her at this moment but she did not lower her eyes. In profile the short curve of the upper lip was thoughtful and ascetic, but the lower lip seemed cold with capabilities of hardness. Nadine found herself wondering where one arrived at so sure a conviction of innate gentleness in the man, for turned full on one, his face was ruthless, intensely willed, and passionate. As a girl could she have comprehended the meaning of companionship with such a man?—a man who lived a life touching other lives closely, both in their hour of triumph and their day of need, moving among all kinds of men and women, rich and poor, powerful and outcast, unwelcome and beloved.

It came to her suddenly how rich life might be for a woman if she spent it in such companionship; but with this thought there came the certainty that she would not have been fit for such a life in those earlier days of restless dependence and unformed personality. Under the constant warfare into which her mar-

riage had plunged her she had grown as a man grows, fighting his world, as a woman rarely grows when she is protected and beloved. She had learned to know the value of quiet understanding in this noisy world, and without understanding of others, control of them is impossible. Her husband's face, with furtive eyes that at any moment might grow terrible, with loose-lipped mouth and heavy jaw, came before her, and the old pain, and the heavy despair of those first years with him, fastened on her heart and turned it cold. She looked again at Wrexford Thorne. It might be that without all that had gone before in her life, she could not have understood the difference between this man, with his swift fine mind and his strong gentle ways, and the men that her marriage had brought into her life. She looked at the happy group about her. Her work among them was nearly done. Life stretched away from this oasis, a barren desert of mere events. She must go back to it in a day or two and go back quite alone.

When the dinner was over, this thought drove her forth to a corner of the porch. It was many minutes before Wrexford Thorne found her there. He stood looking at her a moment.

"Are you grieved because your kindness has completed your work here?"

"Yes," she said. "I shall be lonely."

He made her no answer and a long intimate silence fell between them. After a while he said to her :

“Have you ever thought how wonderful this help you give — that sees so clearly into the heart needs of those you meet — might be made if you were to give it to others whose lives are being wrecked for lack of it? We have much need of help that goes beyond material things.”

“We?” her voice had grown curiously tense.

“I need it almost every day that I spend in my work among those who are unfortunate, especially among the women. I am often unable to discover what they really need, though I am always frightfully conscious of their necessities. You would know. I think you are gifted in drawing from others their hidden pain. Will you not work with me among these people who have so little and yet so often need more than money will buy?”

She drew a long breath. If she did this, her days of companionship with the man before her were not over.

“Yes,” she said.

He held out his hand to her. “I shall hold you to it when we return,” he said, and in his voice there was a new tone.

Nadine put her hand in his and he held it a moment. Clear-brained as he was, he believed merely

that what he felt was the joy of winning her to a finer spending of her life and her gifts. But Nadine knew, deeply and certainly, what this joy was, and why it made the world less empty for her.

Amy came to the door.

"Nadine," she said, "father asks if you will play some Chopin."

"Yes, bride elect. I will be in, in a moment."

"Do you think," she asked gently, "that out of these days together you and I have won friendship for each other?"

For a moment he was utterly silent. The light from the open door shone on her upturned appealing face, and there came to him suddenly a blinding flash of understanding. What, indeed, was this thing they had won from these days together? Friendship — yes — the great love must needs be built on it. This was the friendship they had won, the friendship from which none may escape, once it is found.

"Yes," said Wrexford Thorne. "Yes, we have found — friendship?"

CHAPTER VIII

"For idle hands to do."

"**T**HE truth?" Mrs. Carson looked out over the bay. Her eyes, blue as the sun-flecked water, narrowed, leaving long sweet corners, heavy-lashed and inviting. "How should I know the truth, daughter of Pilate, especially about myself? Ask the archdeacon; the truth is his profession."

Amy Wallace gave the archdeacon a quick look, and finding his eyes fixed on Mrs. Carson with very evident bewilderment, she laughed.

"Not even an archdeacon can tell the truth when he doesn't know it, Nadine," said Amy. "It takes a prophet for that. Imagine asking a man why a woman is bored to tears in spite of his presence, and the attentions of the rest of us who are his friends!"

"I can not see," said the archdeacon, with that literalness that was his gift, "how anybody can be bored here. A delightfully-conducted club; the best harbor on Long Island; fifteen hundred acres of wooded hill and valley, and several miles of beach!"

"He has been reading the catalogue, Nadine."

Perhaps if you read the catalogue you might not be so bored."

A gift for literalness does not include ability to beat about the bush. The archdeacon made immediate inquiry.

"Do we bore you, Mrs. Carson?"

"There was an ancient and truly honorable savant who once had his tongue cut out for asking such a question," said Nadine lightly. "But in those days kings and queens who were bored, did not know that ennui comes from inner causes and not outside influences. If I am bored, it is because I am idle and bore myself. As you suggested, there is everything here any one could want. Here is Miss Wallace arranging a wedding trip with a man any woman would enjoy climbing the Alps with. She could not know the meaning of ennui, even if she were idle. Here also are a round dozen of the Jeffrey family, including Percy and his wife, and I have the chance to prove every day how baseless were their fears that Percy would not marry on my account. And here is the archdeacon running the gamut of criticism from Mrs. Morris and the Jeffreys for being one of our worldly party."

Under her light mockery the archdeacon became as helpless as any large animal teased by a more agile small one. But Amy was not hampered by either an

imposing presence or a necessity to be literal. She tried a goad.

"Is it then the sight of your old attendant absorbed in a new wife that ails you?"

Either the goad or the archdeacon's shocked face produced immediate results. Where she stood leaning against a pillar of the piazza, Mrs. Carson's slender figure suddenly stiffened, though her voice came softly. She turned suddenly on them.

"Well, then, you pursuers of causes, take the truth you have asked for! For week and weeks — Allah alone knows how many — I have been utterly conventional and pious. I have looked on no man with promise of interpreting him to himself. I have troubled no woman by suggestion or innuendo or the assumption of superior wisdom. I have gone about seeking whom I might relieve instead of whom I might devour. I have executed hundreds of Wrexford Thorne's charitable commissions. I have played not at all, and I have worked more than a little. And what is my reward? I come out here bent on rest, and find idleness is no more to be enjoyed. And then just as I have determined that a restful life is an empty life, I am confronted by a flamboyantly blissful bride elect whose life while restful is far from empty. I am approached by another woman who is making perfectly happy a man whom I once thought I alone could

content. The truth — the truth is I have swept and garnished my house, and seven devils stand waiting to enter where but a year ago was only one."

Blank horror settled on the archdeacon's face, lending it a novel force. Nor was it dissipated by Amy Wallace's answer that took Mrs. Carson's tirade with laughing lightness.

"Your diabolical visitation, Nadine, is nothing more than the spirit of the spree. It follows on monotony or overstrain, or hard-pressed self-control too long enforced. You need — to let go for a while."

Mrs. Carson turned again to the sea and spoke looking at it.

"I need an adventure — a risky crazy adventure with a foolish man in it, clever enough to give me trouble."

"The requirements for the man sound Irish," said Amy, "and adventures come with the seeking, not the asking."

The archdeacon could restrain himself no longer.

"There never was an adventure yet that did not get somebody into trouble."

"It is one reason why rectors and archdeacons are so helpful," said Nadine.

Her voice was entirely kind, yet the man was instantly brought to consider the one time she had sent to him for help and he had failed her. He knew per-

fectly that, though she had a man's ability to overlook such a thing, she had also a woman's conviction that he could never again serve her.

A small party of men and women came up the steps of the piazza from the bath-houses on the beach and paused, arranging the afternoon's diversions. Nadine passed over those she knew in the party, her attention arrested by the one stranger among them whose astonishing ugliness rendered him almost distinguished. Protuberant eyes hid their boldness behind powerful-lensed glasses. The slant of the chin from the prominent nose gave the profile a sharply triangular effect.

"Defender of the Faith!" exclaimed Nadine. "It is Poe's Raven come to life. When its mouth opens it will say 'Nevermore.' Watch!"

Curiously taking in the extraordinary effect of the acute triangle in faces, Nadine suddenly found her look caught squarely by the bold eyes behind the glasses. But before she could be sure of the boldness, the face became a blank mask, as though the door of a blind-drawn house had been suddenly shut. It would have intrigued ennui itself.

Nadine turned to Amy.

"Do you think he is only one — or all seven of the guests for whom I have swept and garnished?"

"Your last state will assuredly be worse than your

first if he is any of them. Get behind the archdeacon."

"I beg pardon!" said the archdeacon.

Mrs. Carson made answer:

"You know about the gentleman — he has been admitted a gentleman by eminent authorities, I believe — of the shady record and the unmatched footsteps? I think that is he standing at the end of the veranda looking this way. I think he is searching for some employment for idle hands. And that, if you would show real interest in the matter, stands for me. He is looking for me."

"But a moment ago he was Poe's Raven."

"He is still. You do not remember your Poe. 'Prophet still, if bird or devil!'"

"I have not," said Amy, "forgotten my Kipling."

"As evidenced by what?"

Amy hummed a gay little tune.

"'And you let the chance escape you?' rapped the rattling tonga-bar.

"'What a chance and what an idiot?' clicked the vicious tonga-bar."

"Inspired by that choice slogan I shall go forth to fight," said Nadine.

"Michael of the flaming sword!" mocked Amy.
"The archdeacon will tell you what happens to those who fight such foes."

But the archdeacon declined to be engulfed in such frivolity about serious matters.

"George Meredith has already told me," said Nadine.

The archdeacon, having dutifully waded through a book or two of Meredith's, considered this a place where he might make an inquiry without loss of dignity.

"He objects to Raphael's having painted Michael with so serene a face when he has been warring all day with Lucifer," said Nadine. "'They who the fiend do fight, conquer not upon such easy terms. While mind is mastering clay, gross clay invades it.'"

The ennui had fled from her face, leaving it vivid with sudden youthfulness. Watching it, the stranger leaned toward Percy Jeffrey and said a few words that made Jeffrey turn toward Nadine.

"They are coming here," said Nadine. "Do you wish to escape?"

"Yes, please," said Amy. "The archdeacon and I are going across on the ferry to call on Mrs. Cressler-Wallace. I have discovered that they are old friends. She is quite pleased that the archdeacon is to assist at my wedding."

"In that case," said Nadine, "I shall leave you and meet these other people a little less than half-way."

She moved with slow grace up the piazza.

"I think if we do not wish to eavesdrop, Archdeacon," said Amy, "we shall have to go on down to the ferry."

The archdeacon had no desire to listen. It is sufficiently staggering to any man's vanity to have a woman bored to extinction in his presence. But it is worse to see the boredom flee before the advent of some other man she has never seen before — it is humiliating. Assuredly no man under these circumstances wants to hear what the other man says to her or she to him.

As he took his way to Mrs. Cressler-Wallace's house, he drew over his discomfiture the mantle of a grave dignity, yet he felt a little unable to cope with a curious sense of inefficiency that he began to recognize as almost inevitably connected with his encountering of Mrs. Carson.

His discussion with Mrs. Cressler-Wallace of her coming arrangements for Amy's wedding soothed his discomfort. The wedding was to be held at Cressler and would assemble a house party, in which the archdeacon was to be included. Many of the other guests would be at Belle Terre. They had an interesting chat about these other guests, that touched lightly on Percy Jeffrey's new wife and Mrs. Morris' apparent enmity against Mrs. Carson.

"I think I can not let you talk in my presence about anybody who does not like Nadine," said Amy, laughingly, "and besides if we are to catch the noon ferry that will bring us back to the club in time for luncheon, we must go now."

When they came up on the club-house veranda, there was no sign of Nadine or any of her party. Amy went to luncheon alone, and it was some moments before Nadine came in. Amy looked at her with wonder, for Nadine moved toward the table they shared with a lightness of step and a brightness of face that had not been there when she left the breakfast table.

"Oh, Mercury," said Amy, "what message from the gods?"

"Ah, there are wings on my heels; yes, and I bring you messages." Nadine sat down. "Hearken, happily engaged woman, I have this day thrown away much impedimenta, scenting battle from afar."

"How can you battle with a raven with glassy bold eyes and a chin no human being would wish to own?"

A faint ripple of laughter came from Nadine, and Amy suddenly recalled the extreme rarity of the sound of laughter on her lips.

"You also saw it? I could not let it go without comment. I asked Monsieur le Raven if it had oc-

curred to him that human beings were the only creatures who had chins. He thought them all over from insects to mammals, and then, forced to agree with me, rushed to the conclusion that I denied his humanity. I admitted that I did."

"Did he object?"

"As strenuously as he could, considering his lisp."

"His lisp!"

"It is not exactly a lisp, but a limp in his esses. You would not expect a man with such a chin to manage esses. They require a lower jaw. Try! You can not make an ess without it."

Amy tried. "Go on," she said.

"He rejoices in the name of Higginham, and he comes from Chicago, to a new summer home near Boston, and he is the opulent possessor of two, ten or twenty millions that he has not made himself. Because of this two, ten or twenty millions, no woman has been unkind to him in spite of his extraordinary appearance. As a result he takes sharpness for originality and impertinence for wit."

"You mean he takes *your* impertinence for wit," interrupted Amy.

"It may be. The name of Carson means nothing at all to him, and I separately and privately besought every member of the party not to enlighten him. It offered them just enough diversion at somebody else's

expense for them to agree. They call him Higgle, and he is staying on his yacht in the harbor. It is a good boat."

"How do you know?"

"Because we went aboard to see if we liked it. As we reached the dock, the Raven said to Percy Jeffrey: "Perthy, Mithuth Carthon lookth at me ath if I wath a damned fool. You tell her I am not the damned fool thee lookth at me ath if I wath."

"Nadine, somebody will hear you."

"I can not help it. Of course, you do not like the epithet, but it was what he said, and on the whole what he looked like. There is no other description for the kind of fool he resembles."

"If he looked anything like the way you do when you imitate him I think it quite likely." For as she lisped her words, Nadine had drawn back her own very well-shaped chin and thrust out her nose with a histrionic ability that Amy had not known she possessed. "What," continued Amy, "did Percy answer?"

"What does Percy ever answer? He said: 'Gad, Higgle, what would be the use of my telling her that?' Percy has staircase wit."

"Wait! What is staircase wit?"

"Some Frenchman has called it the things one thinks of as one goes up-stairs to bed that it would have been clever to have said an hour ago. Higgle

pursued the subject. 'What doth Jeffrey mean by that?' he asked.

"Percy, having had a moment to think, expounded his own meaning — that the man did not live who could give me information about any other man; that my intuitions were almost uncanny. Amy, I shall slay the next man who calls the rational processes of my mind intuition. Higgie, however, had small faith in either the rational processes or the intuitions, for he took the trouble to explain for himself that he was not so bad as appearances indicated. I told him that a lisp like his was like a Madonna face to a woman. A woman with a Madonna face can do as she chooses without criticism. A man with a lisp could always fool the other fellow, for he would never be suspected of cleverness. He gave me a curious look, at which Percy with much originality said: 'I told you so.'

"Presently Higgie found the word Carson too much for his lisp, so he dropped it and merely called me his version of 'Missus' which as nearly as I can render it is Mithuth. It smacked so of the-lady-of-the-house that I objected to it."

"You probably objected to its familiarity."

"Who says women can not be friends? I objected to its stupidity. 'If I were you,' I said, 'I would find some name that did not have so many esses in it.'

“ ‘I will,’ he said. ‘Thpitfire!’

“ And then, Amy, I became possessed of the imitative one of ‘the seven’ who is never far from me. And I found that I could reproduce that lisp almost as well as Mr. Higginham himself. It would surprise you, who are beautifully happy, how much the chance of imitating a lisp adds to the joy of living of us poorer mortals. Also, it seems that Higgie’s lisp has been a subject for polite elusion with his friends. A kind of millionaire lisp, decorative because of its owner! If you could have seen the consternation of the others, and the silence they fell into the moment I spoke to their Higgie. To them I was normal — but whenever I spoke to Higgie I sputtered lisped esses.”

“ Surely, Nadine, not as you have mimicked him to me, with that way of drawing back your chin? ”

“ The same way. There were neither esses nor chins for me when he spoke or I answered.”

“ He will follow you around the world! ”

“ There speaks the woman brought up by a man! And it is the truth as far as I can discover it about almost any man. This one suddenly demanded of the whole dumfounded party: ‘Do you thuppothe thee geth along well with her huthband?’ ”

Amy looked at the woman who had been Colin Carson’s wife for the two years before he was adjudged insane, and her laughter died. If Mrs. Car-

son saw the sudden gravity in Amy's face, she gave no sign. The reckless mirth in her blue eyes covered all depths in them. They were brilliantly shallow.

"I need not tell you," she continued, "that this question further paralyzed the stricken audience. They were limp with anxiety, and Higgie, finding no answer forthcoming even from Percy Jeffrey, addressed the question to me.

"'Do you, Madame Thpitfire?' he asked."

"Nadine!"

"Hush! I am but the voice of history. You can not reprove history. I will admit Spitfire is not a nice title, and would not be used by a gentleman—that I objected I am not sure. Its novelty held my interest. I told the Chinless One with a full accompaniment of lisps that I got along admirably with my husband. The audience breathed again, and while they were breathing, Higgie said: 'It ith a thame you do get along with him.'

"Percy Jeffrey couldn't stand it a moment longer. 'Higgie, your sentiment is downright unmoral,' he objected.

"'No,' said Higgie, 'it ith merely evolutionary. If thee quarreled with him there would be a chance for me.'

"This was so brazen that even Percy lost all self-control. 'Higgie,' he said, 'she has five girls.'

"But Higgie was not to be discouraged by a little matter like that. 'I'll get them a governeth apieth,' he said gallantly, 'or thend them to college. And I will get you, Mithuth, any brand of divorce you want.'"

"Nadine, he must have been drunk."

"No, not quite a gentleman — not quite a cad — striving to repay me in my own coin from my impertinence of imitation. You must not forget that I brought it on myself. I suppose there was nobody there who had not wondered if there were any way for me to divorce Colin Carson, and so you can guess how this suggestion of divorce fell upon the party. It could not have happened so but once in a lifetime — I am too well-known, and the circumstances have been too much discussed. So they all stood still waiting for my answer."

"What answer could you make?"

"It is only in crises that I am afflicted with staircase wit. I said: 'You forgot to lisp in the word divorce!'"

"Ah," said Amy, "by that you put the whole thing on the plane of an exhibition he had made for the entertainment of the party — one in which he had forgotten his pose for a moment."

"Yes."

"But the thing, with its touch of underbreeding,

does not seem to have vexed you. On the contrary you are entertained."

"I was intrigued — not entertained. There is a difference — into which the matter of good taste does not enter. But you will not be able to understand that. You have never played this man and woman game alone. You have always had your father with you — and then it has not greatly interested you. I have used it as a drug. Its interest holds when even books and music fail me. There is always complexity even in the simplest of human beings, and the eternal perhaps of each new acquaintanceship has a fascination beyond all other things that I can have. You have no need to fill in empty places in your life. You are leading the normal woman's life. You have love—you will perhaps have children—a home. There is none of these things for me. There is only a world full of men and women, many of whom are utterly uninteresting. When I find either a man or woman who holds my interest, it is no great matter to me whether or not he is well-bred."

"And do you not meet with situations that are — disagreeable?"

"I meet with calumny from women; they can not believe in the spirit of adventure. They call it by all kinds of curious names, suspecting me of heaven knows what. From men a woman gets what she de-

mands. I think men are gifted in discerning the boundaries set up by the women who interest them. I am going to ride with Mr. Higginham to the inlet this afternoon. You will see — alone with me there will not be a word too much or a look too long. Even this impertinent *poseur* could be a gentleman if it were demanded of him by a woman he cared for.”

“I am fearful that some day —”

“Ah, I have some small resourcefulness; and I have been taught in a hard school.”

“But even if your adventuring brings you no harm, Nadine, suppose — suppose it some day leads you to — to love?”

Over the shallowed brilliancy of Nadine’s face crept the subtlest of changes. It was as if some veil had been let fall over eyes and mouth, blurring their meaning.

“How can a woman, with any vision beyond her own vanity, love the kind of man who offers personal attention to a woman — married?”

“It might well be some man who would not think of offering such attention,—a man whose culture matches your own; whose experience makes him interesting; whose character is beyond suspicion.”

Nadine’s eyes narrowed. It was as if she shaded them the better to see a far-off figure.

"I do not meet such men in my life—often. Love—love requires a measure of opportunity for growth. And this kind of a man would not be attracted to me."

"Why, you are attractive to—" Amy paused a moment with a sudden flash of wondering suspicion. "There is no woman whom Wrexford considers more than you; and he is that kind of a man."

Mrs. Carson suddenly opened wide her narrowed eyes. The effect was startling. For one brief instant there blazed on Amy Wallace a vision of what may lie hidden in the soul that uses for its speech the human eye; a vision of hunger and thirst that beg ceaselessly for rest; a vision of the infinite yearning that finds room only in the infinite spirit, and is as far beyond bodily need as the pain of the unloved heart is beyond the pang of the hurt body.

There are no words for such a revelation, and between the women fell a long silence. Amy broke it quietly.

"Carleton telephoned while you were gone this morning that he could not get out here to-night because of an early operation to-morrow, but that he would be here by seven to-morrow night and—bring—bring—Wrexford with him."

As the veil of Nadine's heavy lashes fell over her

eyes and the old tired look masked her face, Amy wondered if she had been mistaken. So careless was the voice with which Nadine said:

“To-morrow night? We must have dinner served under the pergola. There will be moonlight.”

CHAPTER IX

"Oh this I have felt,
And this I have guessed,
And this I have heard men say."

"SHE is firm in the saddle and light on the snaffle," said Higginham to himself.

And as Nadine rode, now at his side along the sandy beach, and now before him in the forest, there was a droop of the shoulder and a swaying curve about the waist on which the man's eyes dwelt again and again. The sea and the sky about him, the wood and beach before him, were beautiful, but men whose lives lie in the peopled places of the earth return always from outlooks to inlooks.

And so Higginham, who had clearly announced that he had come out to see the beauties of the far-famed club, kept his eyes on the woman riding with him. He found maturity in neither face nor figure. The figure was slenderly girlish, for all its gracious curves. He looked at the short upper lip where it met the full lower one; at the soft chin; at the delicate down-curved eyebrows and eyelids, and wondered if the curiously virginal look of the face dwelt

in any one of these things. To leave its mark on a face, passion must be felt. It is not enough to inspire it. He could find no trace here of elemental emotions, yet somewhere lay a promise of their existence, and somewhere in her face, need was written, need of what Higginham could not say.

She turned, and looked at him as he studied her. We carry our wants, and our failures, and our successes close about us. If they have come, servants of our own will; if we have become men and women by the daily building of myriad acts of determination, these acts eventually surround us with an atmosphere that, cloud it as we may with speech, tells its own story. And when once these things have become part of the spirit they are forming, they hover about a face, needing neither word nor gesture for expression.

"A marriage that has been an utter failure," thought the man, who but a few hours ago had responded to impertinence with folly. "She has not yet found herself."

"And what have you concluded?" said Nadine suddenly.

"That some day fate will bestir herself on your account." The lisp was hardly audible.

"It was some woman who invented the worship of fate," said Nadine. "It is always pleasant to a woman to hold fate responsible. Sometimes if she is re-

ligious she calls it Providence. The man who can arrange that a woman need never blame herself, who can make her believe that fate has a hand in the matter, is always successful with women."

"Then a woman will forgive where no fault can be found with herself?"

"Almost always." Nadine looked out over the water. "Is that your launch following us down the Sound?"

"Yes. It will, I think, reach the inlet before we do. The men are to serve tea and sandwiches to us there."

"What a delightful arrangement! The whole thing is a marvel of executive ability. You had so little time. I did not suppose you could even get a horse. And here I am riding toward a tea-table five miles from nowhere."

Higginham looked at her. His tone was light, but his eyes were very steady.

"I, not get what I set out for! Well, not yet. It may come sometime — so far it has not."

"What a very awesome man! Your fate probably has a thing or two in store for you also. No man is allowed to go through the world so unconquered. It is too dangerous."

Nadine reined in her horse sharply, for as they made a sudden turn, following the curve of the beach,

from where he lay prone on the sand a man sprang up before them; a man with a white unshaven face, who, after a swift look at Mrs. Carson, checked his first impulse to run.

"Well!" said Higginham sharply to the man.

"Wait!" said Nadine, for the man was swaying as he stood before them. "He is ill."

"Or drunk!" said Higginham.

"I am hungry, not drunk," said the man quickly. "I have not eaten for two days."

Mrs. Carson leaned over her saddle to look at him. Then she said to him:

"Just beyond that clump of rocks around the curve of the beach there are some sandwiches waiting for us. They belong to this man, but I am sure he will be glad to give you something to eat if you will come with us."

The man's drawn face relaxed a little.

"Thank you," he said simply.

Higginham openly scowled. The unwarrantable intrusion of a third person into his carefully-arranged affair, even though the third person was merely a hungry tramp, was disagreeable to him. His sullenness, as the horses walked the short distance to the inlet where the launch was already moored, was so perceptible that Nadine modified it by an encourag-

ing nod to the white-faced man dragging his feet through the sand behind them.

It was Nadine who, off her horse, with her riding skirt looped up over a distracting boot, took the man a plate of piled-up sandwiches and a cup of tea, where he sat on a fallen tree trunk a little distance from them. She saw him hold himself in control until she left him, and even then, though he fell on the sandwiches hungrily, it was not gluttonously.

She paused a moment before returning to her host, looking at the white canvas chairs from the launch drawn into the shade of a great rock; at the folding tea-table, bright with its silver alcohol teapot and its cups and fresh linen; at the men watering the horses at a creek that tumbled into the inlet far enough away from the tea-table for their presence to be practically negligible. It had taken excellent arrangements to produce this, and Nadine laughed softly, for instead of a complaisant and unchaperoned lady the arranger had as guest a half-starved man who used good English and ate like a gentleman. It was hard. She came up to where Higginham stood waiting for her, smiling at him. But Higginham was not mollified by the smile.

"I would have attended to him," he said, "after you were served."

"Yes, I know." Nadine's voice was soft. "But you do not mind my doing it, do you? I could not eat your delicious sandwiches with any appreciation when such hunger was about. May I pour your tea?"

But Higginham felt himself defrauded, for Mrs. Carson kept an eye on the man behind her, and presently asked if he minded if she called him over to question him.

"He will not answer you," said Higginham, "or if he does it will not be the truth."

"Let us see," said Nadine. "And perhaps we shall know if it is the truth. You have not looked at him closely. He has a look I have seen often during my work among the poor that are hardest to reach—those who are supporting themselves meagerly, and are not objects of charity, and yet are in real need that they are too proud to confess."

Higginham gave her a curious look. This was not the same woman who had lisped at him on his yacht that morning; and yet perhaps even in her morning's mood she had looked behind his own words, and found the man whom her audacious mockery held as no complaisance would have done.

"Very well," he said. "I will call him."

The man came with hesitation, and responded slowly. To Higginham he had very little to say. And then Higginham heard Nadine speak as she

would to a man of her own world whom she greatly desired to answer her. There was in her voice a soft persuasiveness and a kindness that in itself would have provoked confidence. One felt instinctively that one would be understood, no matter what curious thing one had to tell; and the effect was instant, as are all effects dependent on instinctive things.

"I was," said the man, "until yesterday assistant to the head waiter at the Bradport Sanatorium across the Sound."

Higginham saw Nadine suddenly lean forward in her chair, the softness in her face yielding to watchfulness.

"Go on," she said imperatively.

"There is very little to say," the man answered simply. "This sanatorium is for the very rich who are crazy enough to require constant watching, but too rich to be kept penned in. They give these people all the liberty that they can safely give them, and then some. They cater to them in every way, most of them belonging to families with a lot of influence. It is not easy to work in such a place. The patients are so uncertain; you have to watch every minute. But you forget to do it; it isn't in nature to watch every minute. Besides, they go along steady until you think they are getting cured and their folks'll take 'em out soon, and then like as not at dinner they'll grab

a glass or a fork — they don't give 'em knives — and try to carve up their next neighbor. I was waiter at the Hudson Club for three years with a good place, but since I married it wasn't quite enough money. I took this place only for the big pay. My wife — my wife needs the money just now, pretty bad — and she'll need more — so I went out to Bradport three months ago.

“There was a man there that had been brought from a sanatorium over here that he liked better than this one where he is. Nothing could be done to suit him, though they took all kinds of pains to please him. He took most of his meals in his room, for his grouches were something awful. I had to wait on him, and a more savage snarling dog of a man I never saw. He had a way of drawing back his upper lip, and puttin' out his head at you, and growlin' like an angry cur — and his words — they were awful.”

Every tinge of the wild-rose color that the ride had brought into Mrs. Carson's face ebbed from it. The man paused, observant, as a man is when it is his business to serve others.

“Go on,” said Mrs. Carson quietly.

“He did not like me — this man, but then he didn't like anything. There were a hundred times when I would've gladly given my wages to fight it out with him. I was just crazy myself to punch him every time

he cursed me — but my wife — I was working for her. And then yesterday I came to his room with a tray of things, and he was standing by the window holding the arm of one of the maids, working same as I was for the extra money in it — not because she liked running risks with crazy men and women — and he was sticking his beast's face into hers, and she too frightened to cry out.

“I should've rung for his especial attendant, but I never thought. When I came in he let loose on me words no more fit for that girl to hear than for yourself, and I knew my time had come right then and there. I took him by the throat, and I shook him up so that he fell on the floor looking as if he was all broken up inside.

“And the girl says: ‘You've killed him. Clear out — I'll lock the door.’

“If I'd taken time to think it over I'd have stayed and faced it out. But there was just time to catch the boat over here, and they set such store by these rich patients, you can't touch 'em, and so — I'm here. I'm telling you because I might as well go back and face it out. A man can't go on this way. And there's my wife — and I've got to find some job — if he isn't hurt so's they'll interfere with me.”

He stopped, looking out over the water toward the dim line of the Connecticut shore, and Nadine turned

her white face to Higginham. He read its message perfectly, but with small desire to accede to it. Yet he spoke curtly to the man. His lisp was again slightly noticeable.

"Can you give decent references — if I were to take you on?"

The man stared at him. One would have said he hurriedly hid sudden resentment at the supercilious tones that had addressed him.

"I think the Hudson Club will give me good references, sir. I was there a long time."

"And this temper of yours! Is there any means of guaranteeing that it will not break loose for the throttling of men who offend you and are not crazy?"

The man looked very squarely at Higginham, and very miserably, too.

"I haven't much temper, sir. No man who waits on other men, bringing them food and pouring them wine, has. And perhaps you've never been around a crazy man, sir, and don't know how it is."

"But if a man is not in his right mind, he is not responsible for what he does, and nothing short of defending your own safety excuses pounding him up."

Mrs. Carson spoke quietly. "Yet if a man is only half-mad; if he has long lucid intervals when he is merely — impossible — one forgets this vague line of responsibility. If this patient of the Bradport Sana-

torium is the one I think he is, there is every excuse. I recognized the description by the snarl and the lip drawn back over the teeth. He has also a trick of gnawing at the knuckle of his left hand. It is generally raw and bleeding, and sometimes when he snarls his teeth and lips are flecked with blood. Is it not true?"

She turned to the waiter.

"It is true," he said, staring at her.

"What is your name?" she asked him.

"Rawlins, madam." He still stared curiously at her.

"Rawlins, when I return to the club I will telephone Bradport, and find the extent of your damage. Have you any money?"

"A little."

"Then get yourself straightened up at the village, and get a good meal. At six o'clock telephone me at the club-house, giving your name, and I will let you know." She paused an instant, returning his look squarely. "I am Mrs. Colin Carson," she said.

He gave a sudden jerk of the head, and his eyes fell.

"I will see you through," said Mrs. Carson slowly. "You need not be afraid to telephone. If there is no other position for you, perhaps I can find one myself."

Higginham spoke in low tones of her rashness. She gave him a quick look of impatience.

"You can put it through yourself if you like," she said. Then she turned to Rawlins. "It is but a short walk through the woods, by that path near the creek, to the village."

She gave a little nod that dismissed him, and as he took the path through the wood Higginham's eyes searched her face. For both her manner and accent had been those of the woman used to trained service in even the smallest trifles.

"Are you afraid of him?" said Mrs. Carson lightly.

"I am not afraid," said Higginham. "I will take him on if the Hudson will vouch for his honesty. I need a butler on the yacht. But I should like you to tell me why —"

He paused, for Nadine's face encouraged no questions.

"You are kinder than I supposed," she said, and the voice was cool and almost insolent.

He had a sudden impulse of retaliation — of that kind that is old as sex. It was so impelling that he turned away quickly to summon the men with the horses. Yet, even turned from her, he could see the pliant curves he had watched as they rode through the woods and across the beach, and the short upper lip that could express insolence so well, and the long blue eyes with their hundred changes.

CHAPTER X

"Something I owe to the soil that grew —
More to the life that fed —
But most to Allah who gave me two
Separate sides to my head."

"**I** AM a little afraid," said the archdeacon as he sat the next evening on the veranda with Amy Wallace, waiting for Mrs. Carson to come out of the ball-room, "of the interpretation of Mrs. Carson's conduct by all these people."

He looked through the long windows to where Mrs. Carson was dancing with Higginham. Her hair was massed into gold-brown waves just at the curve of her head above the neck, and held in place in the prevailing mode by a broad band of priceless sapphires. Her gown of silver tissue, threaded with blue, was caught at her bare neck with a diamond-bordered blue stone, that shone no more brilliantly than the white skin on which it rested.

"You would not believe," continued the archdeacon earnestly, "that she was the same woman who worked all these weeks with Wrexford Thorne and me over the sick and the poor and — and — the rest

of them. She is gifted at it. They will tell her things they would not tell us, and she sees so quickly what they need. I would not believe it at first; but Thorne did, and he held me back while she tried her queer ways with them — in the night courts, and in the hospitals, and in the shops. She could reach the women when we could do nothing at all. Once she took a girl out and bought her all kinds of clothes — foolish clothes, finer than she needed. Yet when I spoke to Thorne he shook his head. 'She knows,' he said. 'Wait and you will see.' And now — look at her."

Amy looked, but behind the face framed in its barbaric splendor of jewels she could see only strain and a deep restlessness. She wondered if the cause lay in her next sentence to the archdeacon.

"Wrexford will be here in a moment. He came on the eight o'clock train — later than he meant to come. He waited for Carleton, who could not leave his patient after all. He is up-stairs dressing."

Even as she finished her sentence Wrexford Thorne came out of the hall door to where they sat under the electric lights watching the windows of the ball-room. About the tall figure with its great breadth of shoulders there was a certain suppleness of movement that in a woman would have been called grace, but in a man was merely ease of bearing. His evening clothes sat well on him, his lifted head took command of the

place where he stood, his eyes had a thoughtful distinction of glance, and as he leaned on the railing of the veranda chatting with Amy and the archdeacon, the women who passed to and fro from the ball-room to the porch turned to look at him.

"Does Nadine know you are here?" asked Amy. "After Carleton's telephone at five we gave you up."

"I have not seen her," he answered.

"She is in there dancing," said the archdeacon. "You can see her now."

Wrexford Thorne looked through the windows, quietly at first, then intently, then with head bent forward, dominantly. First the curve at the back of a white neck with bronze curls like feathers escaping from the masses of her jewel-bound hair; a shimmering silver figure held in the hollow of a man's arm, swaying with pliant allure; then as the dance ceased, and the man released her, a low forehead framed in sapphires, eyes that he knew could deepen beyond his own knowledge of them, now shallow as the sapphires above them, tolerant of folly, smiling on bravado, searching for forgetfulness in the moment's snatch at pleasure; softly-spun silver caught on a bare white neck by a great blue stone — and the man beside her watching her with a look no other man mistakes.

And out of the burden of pain laid on the world to

train it to endurance, came sudden sharp fingers clutching at what seemed to Wrexford Thorne to be his very heart until it ached with the misery of this other man's look at her.

"There is to be supper presently, to which we are all asked," said Amy. "Mr. Jeffrey is giving it, and it is to be on the terrace under the pergola. I am so sorry Carleton could not come, Wrexford."

"Yes, the city is pretty hot, but he will come out to-morrow with your father, and I shall come with him again."

"Do you go in to-morrow morning?"

"Yes." He saw Nadine, folded by Higginham in a blue silken wrap, move slowly to the other end of the veranda.

"Mr. Carson," said Amy in a low voice to Thorne, "has been hurt by a waiter in the Bradport Sanatorium. Nadine is going over to-morrow — he is not much hurt — just uncomfortable."

"It would be better if she kept away from him. He says frightful things to her, and he is dangerous."

They were joined by several of the Jeffrey party, men and women, who were cousins and connections.

"We have to come to warn you," said Mrs. Percy Jeffrey, "that nobody is to furnish Higgie with real information about Mrs. Carson. We have played him such a set of pranks he is nearly distracted trying to

find out who and what she is. Tom told him she was on the stage, but declined to give him her stage name. And Percy told him she had a frightful time keeping the wolf from the door, to say nothing of keeping up elaborate enough appearances to run with the crowd. You know the utter simplicity of Mrs. Carson's clothes — the simplicity that costs thousands, and needs an artist for dressmaker. We women know it, but a man could never tell.

“And then to-night, she suddenly blazed out in a hundred thousand dollars' worth of sapphires, and a gown made of starlight! She came into the room as Percy and Higgie were together — did you ever see her so lovely? And Higgie said that did not look economical to him. Percy told him the jewels were paste, and that Mrs. Carson had made her own dress. He told him this in front of us all, and we were nearly convulsed over trying to act as if we had always known it. We don't really know whether Higgie believes us or not, but that increases our fun. Oh, but, Mr. Thorne, I should never have told this tale in front of you, but I was afraid that Higgie, learning you were a rector, might come to you for the truth.”

“He could not very well discuss Mrs. Carson with a stranger, could he?” asked Thorne.

“Oh, Higgie's thirst for information is so great that he could do anything! He thinks Mrs. Carson is

the only woman in the world who does not care if she never sees him again. No wonder he can not eat or sleep over it! Here they come. Look at Higgie!"

But Wrexford Thorne did not look at Higgie. Straight into the brilliant shallows of Nadine's eyes he looked. And where she was she stopped still. Her hand on Higginham's arm stiffened and chilled, and then fell quietly to her side. Over her jewel-framed face swept a look that was as if she had taken a long breath before facing something that needed all her self-control. It was but an instant, and then she drew the veil of her social manner about her, reaching the new-comer naturally and without ostentation.

Amy Wallace, watching, made one of those swift rearrangements of a party that any hostess understands. They closed about Higginham and Percy Jeffrey with gay diversion, excluding Nadine and the man she greeted quietly, holding out her hand, her bare arm uncovered from her silken wrappings by the movement. His hand closed over hers, held it with close-clasped strength, and released it.

"I have been watching you dance," he said. "It is the first time I have seen you — dancing."

"Are you ready to offer me half of your kingdom?"

"You were not dancing for me."

Nadine looked at the moonglade stretching across

the water to the horizon, and hid her thoughts behind words.

"It is significant that while many kings have offered women whose dancing pleased them various portions of their kingdoms, no queens have been moved to that kind of generosity. You can see the same thing at any summer resort."

He took no advantage of her retreat from the personal to a generality that offered both of them a discussion and, after the silence he did not fill had lasted a moment, Nadine brought her eyes back from the horizon to him.

"What else was I doing?"

"Besides dancing? I think you were running away."

Her eyes looked disbelief in his discernment, but she answered him readily enough.

"It is an older means of survival than staying to face one's enemy — by some thousand years, is it not? What do you suppose changed men who by actual experience discovered that the fastest runner lived the longest, and taught them to stay where they were and fight it out?"

He saw that in a few deft sentences she had again made the subject general. Professionally he worked with women most of the time, and their ability to make

all things personal was one of his difficulties. So now he answered her with some inner amusement over the contrast of their interchanged sentences with the ball-room facing them; the jesting party about them; the glitter of silver and glass, and the glow of white linen and roses that awaited them at the terrace beyond the veranda.

"Perhaps some women did it," he said. "For endurance is found at its best in women. Perhaps being unable to run away, some woman found that a new kind of strength, larger than physical strength, was to be won by the courage of facing danger, and of bearing burdens instead of putting them down and trying some new conditions."

Nadine smiled at him softly.

"Oh, Expounder of the Law!" she said. "You will tell me next that until one learns to manage properly one's own burden one can not help with anybody else's. And all because a few million years ago somebody found out that in one way or another there was always something to threaten life, and that if one always ran away there would be no time to do anything else."

He smiled.

"Enter the economy of time. Assuredly if one has not learned the best way of managing one's own trouble he has not time for his neighbor's assistance."

She looked back at the moonglade.

"Do you, who try to understand these things, suppose that is the reason for all this world-burden — to train us to endurance and control?"

"It does seem that no one may escape his share of it and grow strong. There are a good many kinds of weakness, but I suppose no strength without endurance and control. I have a feeling about any man or woman who is much burdened that they are being trained for something that requires strength."

"You are bringing in fate — fate that only yesterday I said women loved — but like a man you are eliminating the necessity, especially for women not made for endurance, of rest. Sometimes running away for a while makes for renewed strength."

"Nadine, Nadine, listen to what Higgie said of you!" called Percy Jeffrey.

"*E phlokamos Calypso!*" said the rector, and was overheard.

Higginham caught the phrase and translated it.

"Calypso of the well-curled hair," he murmured to Nadine as he paused beside her, "we are going to supper, and I'm taking you."

"Where," said Nadine, "did you learn Greek? And why does the Greek ess offer you no difficulties?"

But Higgie only laughed.

Seated at the supper table none of the party was disposed to let what they considered the fun of the evening slip by them. When, therefore, Percy Jeffrey spoke to those about him, after shamelessly listening to Higginham's effort to adjust Nadine's sapphires with her previous assertion that she did not like jewels, almost everybody at the table listened.

"Higgie," said Percy, "is trying to bribe Mrs. Carson, but he can not find anything she likes. Is there anybody here clever enough to help him?"

Higginham fixed Jeffrey behind his powerful-lensed glasses.

"All of you help," he said. "Each one of you thinkth he ith cleverneth ithelf. Each one tell me one thing that would pleathe a woman who doth not like jewelth or flowereth or candy."

Suggestions began to flow in on Higginham, covering everything a woman might possibly care for. He offered them carefully to Nadine.

"Higgie," said Jeffrey, "your intentions are demanded; your gifts are beyond the limit of the platonic."

"My intentions are matrimonial," said Higgie imperturbably. "Leave me in peathe."

But Nadine shook her head.

"There is nothing in new motors and tiaras to engage interest—save for a woman to whom the ac-

cumulation of things is in itself interesting." Catching Percy's eye, she added, "Unless, of course, she is that distressing thing, a poor woman born among rich ones; in which case, load her with everything she lacks, unless you are so stupid as to offend with your giving. Some people are."

The end of this sentence reminded the archdeacon of others of Mrs. Carson's replies in which he himself had often become involved—the ones that looked rather nice until you came to think them over. To the archdeacon the whole affair and the fun the others were getting out of it seemed little short of idiotic. He said so to Amy Wallace as she sat next to him.

"I doubt if Mr. Higginham is as idiotic as he seems," she answered, "or he would not have engaged Nadine's attention. Look at Nadine herself. Could you believe that you heard her play Beethoven with absolute accuracy last night, and follow it with Chopin played with entire individuality. Listen to her as she tells that gaping group the latest approved methods of winning a woman; this morning she was showing me where Bernard Shaw's ideas were of the same substance as Nietzsche's and Maeterlinck's, and pursuing these ideas, she went to her rooms for a copy of *Peer Gynt* in the original, for a quotation she wanted."

Now, the archdeacon did not know what Beethoven

played without accuracy or Chopin without individuality might signify. He had merely watched Mrs. Carson at the piano, and approved. As for Bernard Shaw, the archdeacon did not consider him a proper subject for conversation between a man and a woman.

So he contented himself with replying: "I have been in her library."

"Where Vibert's paintings wink at Gleyre's, and Hafiz chats with Monsieur Beaucaire?"

The archdeacon felt that this was nearly as bad as some of Mrs. Carson's own sentences. He had no idea that Vibert's paintings winked, nor who Gleyre might be. At the moment he was wondering what the original of *Peer Gynt* was, and what he would have done if Mrs. Carson had made the quotation to him. He did not recall her ever speaking to him as she was now talking.

"Give her what she has not," said Nadine. "If she is proud, load her with obligation; if she is lovely, appeal to her brains; if she is brainy, babble of her beauty; if she is wise, credit her with divine folly; if she is conventional, offer her an adventure; if she is resourceful, confuse her, entrap her."

The archdeacon, still marveling on the many sidedness he could not understand, essayed a question.

"But if she is all of these?"

Nadine smiled across the table at him.

"Still you have physical strength that she has not; subdue her with it. Carry her off, and let her rage helplessly over her own weakness and acknowledge your strength. Women have been won by less."

It was apparent even to that unobservant party that this was a thing that the archdeacon in his wildest moment could not possibly contemplate, and they received the suggestion with a glee that embarrassed him exceedingly. Only Amy saw, under cover of the ensuing laughter, the look Higginham had cast on Nadine as she answered the archdeacon.

"What are you doing to-morrow?" Higginham asked Nadine.

"I am going to Bradport on the morning boat. I shall not be able to return until late in the afternoon, on the return boat."

"May I not take you over? Then you can come back when you choose."

She gave the matter several minutes' thought. It would be quicker and more agreeable to go on Higginham's yacht, but if she did he might possibly accompany her ashore, and she would perhaps have to explain her errand to the sanatorium.

"No," she answered him at length. "You can not take me over, but if you will make up a party you may come after me, and bring me back. I can be at the Bradport Yacht Club any time you say. I go at

ten, and it is an hour and a half over. I shall need an hour there."

"I will, in that case, make it a luncheon party. I will ask whomever you like to-night. We can have luncheon aboard as soon as you come on—say at one."

CHAPTER XI

"If we fall in the race, though we win,
The hoof-slide is scarred on the course."

MRS. CARSON left the Bradport Sanatorium at half after twelve and drove to the Bradport Yacht Club. She passed Mrs. Cressler-Wallace's automobile on her way and shrank back out of sight. Mrs. Wallace lived five miles on the other side of Bradport, across the bay from Belle Terre. When she reached the yacht club, she dismissed her carriage and mounted the steps wearily, her gray-blue draperies, heavy with embroidery, swept about her by a brisk breeze from the Sound. She paused a moment to look out over the water. Higginham's yacht was not yet in sight.

Inside the maid took her long blue coat and unwound the veil from her hat. She sat quietly at the dressing-table a moment, and in the droop of her shoulders and the turn of her head there was a listlessness that was almost despair. The maid left the dressing-room, but stood in the door of the drawing-room watching her, examining the blue crêpe gown held close to her figure by its heavy embroideries, the

bronze hair under the blue hat, the dark-ringed blue eyes, mournful in a dead-white face.

Nadine did not look at any of this in the glass. Her listless gaze was visualizing another face that seemed to measure the world for her, binding her hand and foot to sacrifice of self. It was a face that for all its blankness had snarled at her so often that she saw it that way when she thought of it, with lifted lips from which pointed teeth projected threateningly. Because of this there could not be for her either of the great things of a woman's life — neither love nor motherhood.

All these years she had been running away from its effect on her life, filling the vacant spaces in her hours with all manner of small things like books, and music, and new places. They had failed her. Even her work among the unfortunate had remained a game above which her life had greater needs, a game made interesting from its direction by Wrexford Thorne.

She wondered if he was right, and that it had remained only a game because she had not yet learned to bear her own share of the world-burden. And this other game, played by Circe thousands of years ago — it began to lose its savor. Perhaps even Circe hoped one man of them all might drink her drugged wine, and still resist transformation.

She saw the maid watching her, and she looked at

herself in the glass, counting as she looked the years that had gone into the creation of the look her eyes gave her back.

"I need rouge," she said to the maid. "Is there some?"

"There at the right, madam. Shall I help you?"

Nadine shook her head. She dipped her slender fingers into the red powder, and touched her cheeks and lips lightly. Several years fell away from her face with the added color. Her eyes deepened; the dark circles of fatigue beneath them softened; the curve of the lips ripened and became alluring.

Then she looked out of the window to the water. There was at least an afternoon's forgetfulness of it all before her. They would be a gay party of idlers, with Amy Wallace as balance-wheel — and then tonight Wrexford Thorne would come out with Carleton and Amy's father. It was enough for one day.

The man in the hall gave the maid a name.

"Mr. Higginham, for you, Mrs. Carson," she repeated.

Nadine went out into the hall.

As Higginham held out his hand to her, she put her own into it with no greeting, merely looking at him. It was the merest trick of coquetry, but Higginham, recalling it later as he put her into the launch at the end of the pier, was glad he had taken enough

wine to hearten him for the adventure he was arranging. For when she looked at a man without speaking in that way, the world was made for her. Much as he preferred the untrammelled condition of bachelorhood, he would almost have been willing to marry her with that air of appeal in which she could surround herself.

Nadine looked at the yacht as they approached it.

"Nobody seems to be waiting up for me," she said.

"Jeffrey cut his finger fixing a lemon for a new drink that nobody but himself could prepare. They are in the cabin helping him fix it up. It bled as if he had opened an artery, and frightened them all to death. A beastly reception of you, but you'll see them soon enough."

As they reached the deck, Higginham detained her a moment to show her, on the chart that lay on a table near her, the distance he had covered in a shorter space of time than he had supposed it could be done. The yacht got under way as he compared the time with the hour and a half it had taken her in the morning.

Nadine turned from the chart to the cabin.

"Percy must have a real hemorrhage," she said, "or else there has been a graver accident than you have told me of."

Higginham measured the distance between them

and the blurring shore, and finding it satisfactory, he said:

"It is not an accident. It is prearranged. I am following your instructions for the capture of a resourceful woman. At eleven this morning I sent notes to all of the other guests postponing the luncheon. I wanted you without their attendance for one afternoon."

As the full measure of his lisping words conveyed itself to Nadine, she paused on her way to the cabin, and faced the man who looked at her quietly behind his powerful-lensed glasses. Deep within her sudden laughter clamored for expression, changing under the man's look to a thrill of excitement.

She had searched for relief from her ennui; here was an adventure indeed, the open sea, and an unknown brigand. She had demanded a drug for the relief of her burdened days; here was a powerful poison, needing careful measuring lest it become dangerous beyond repair.

Higginham had expected objection, concern, even abuse. He had carefully chosen the wine that was to carry him through the ordeal of her first anger. And she stood before him in silence absolutely effective, for it threw on him the need of further excuse, if excuse was to be had, even of apology, if apology there was. He considered both, and finding

them quite inadequate, should they come from the kind of man who would do what he was doing, he let the idea pass.

"Will you have luncheon at once?" he asked.

"How far do we go?" asked Nadine.

"Just a brief afternoon's cruise. But we are coaled and provisioned for a long trip."

"How long?"

"Two or three weeks."

Nadine had asked her question to gage, if she could, the sound of the man's voice, by which she was judging the truth of what he said. She looked at her watch. In arranging the party the night before it had been with the plan of getting back early, in time to meet Amy's father and Wrexford Thorne when they came out on the afternoon train.

"I must be at the club at four," said Nadine.

"To meet the clerical gentleman who caused you such a start when you were walking with me last night?"

For a moment Nadine returned this impertinence with an appraising look, then she answered:

"Miss Wallace's father is my new manager and I have many things to talk over with him before dinner."

Higginham considered. If she were really a successful actress, hiding her identity during a summer

vacation under a married name — and this manager talk would seem to indicate it — there were certain steps in the progress of what he meant to say to her that might be left out.

“If you were not in such a hurry,” he said, “about returning to your new manager, you could count on me to build you a theater and give it your name.”

Nadine’s first sense of actual danger struck at her. This was what Amy had meant when she told her that in some of her adventures she would some day meet the thing she did not want to hear. She had declined to consider the possibility, relying on her understanding of the kind of man she admitted to her acquaintance. And she was facing a man that by no stretch of imagination could be called a gentleman, with, therefore, no other protection from the thing she did not want to hear than her own wits might furnish her. Not even her gift of persuasion could help her here.

She lifted her head, and looked at him with an insolence he could hardly credit under the circumstances.

“I am,” she said contemptuously, “quite a great deal more able to build myself a theater than you could possibly be.”

“In that case,” said Higginham, and his lisp was scarcely noticeable, “there is no immediate hurry for your return.”

"You can not have a reason for prolonging our tête-à-tête beyond my own wish. I wish to return at once."

"I might possibly wish to go on — farther."

Nadine faced the situation.

"You can not run off with me."

"Ah, can I not?" said Higginham grimly.

"Every wire will buzz with it; every newspaper feature it. Such things are not done."

Higginham looked at the dim line of shore and smiled.

"I am willing to repay all you will lose."

"Repay!"

"I'll marry you if you like. From your friends' conflicting statements about you I could gather only two or three things that were credible. One was that you did not live with your husband; another was that a divorce would probably be acceptable to you, but that you could not get one. I'll get you a divorce. This little trip will fix it up for you."

Nadine set a watch on the rage that was assuming an almost overpowering desire to injure physically the man who sped his insults so glibly. Measuring her own small resources in this warfare between them, she knew uncontrollable anger would blunt all her weapons. Yet some of it sharpened her voice.

"There is no conceivable combination of events that would make me marry you," she said.

"Even after — say a little run over to Europe — as we are now."

"Not then or at any time."

"It would look better to finish it up with a wedding."

"You must surely know that I do not consider appearances to that extent. Besides, I can buy appearances. I can buy an exceedingly reputable party of people who will talk unceasingly of the good time they had on your suddenly arranged trip. You will not be able to deny them. They will be more credible than you."

Higginham had his first misgiving. This was a species of intelligence he had not counted on. If by any chance she had behind it the power of wealth, she could do as she said.

"It would take a small fortune," he suggested, inquiringly.

"I have several that I can very well spare for the purpose."

"I do not insist on a wedding," said Higginham. "But you are very attractive to me. I can think of nothing that would entertain me more than just such a spin across the Atlantic. Meantime, will you go in to lunch?"

"I will stay on deck."

"In that case, you will perhaps excuse me a mo-

ment while I arrange to have luncheon served on deck."

He rolled up the chart, and went into the cabin.

Nadine sank down on the chair before the table that had held the chart, and stared blankly before her. And as she sat there a waiter, with a table-cloth over his arm and a tray of silver, gave a careful look about the cabin, closed the door swiftly, and reached her side in a few steps. She looked at him unseeingly.

"Mrs. Carson," he spoke hurriedly, "I have overheard much of your conversation. I had no idea that we were preparing for you, or that whomever we were preparing for would be unwilling to go. We are headed for the Bermudas."

"Rawlins!" said Mrs. Carson, and suddenly the fear that had begun to cloud her eyes lightened. "Rawlins, I must get out of this. Is it a matter of money?"

"I think not, Mrs. Carson. They have all been long in his service."

"I have a good deal of money, and my own service if positions are to be found, and influence enough to obtain other positions on other yachts. I must return at once."

"That is the difficulty. Bribery — and of a captain long in the owner's service — it takes time. You will understand that I am absolutely at your service. And,

if you please, not for money. I hoped we might think of some immediate way of return. Mr. Higginham will be back soon."

She interrupted. Under her rouge her white face began to take on color of its own.

"None of the crew is a doctor?"

"No, madam."

"Then if anybody were to be dangerously ill —"

"Short of Mr. Higginham himself, I think they would have to stand it — for at least a day or two."

At the simple phrase Nadine found every feminine fiber protesting against the situation she had helped to bring on herself; protesting to the point of the rage she had bridled a few minutes ago.

"Rawlins, you are serving luncheon?"

"Yes, madam."

"Surely there is something on this boat that will make its owner ill. Has he no medicine-chest?"

"There are simple medicines aboard, yes, madam; for the ordinary ailments of the crew —"

"There must be some opiate for the different kinds of pain it is needed for. Laudanum for toothache!"

The man's face brightened suddenly.

"The cook used it for earache last night. He got water in his ear, swimming. Ten drops would do it. But it is bitter to taste."

"Do you know how to fix it, Rawlins?"

"Madam, I have been three months waiter in a lunatic asylum. There were times when a sleeping potion in a glass of wine was the only thing to be done. I have fixed it before under the doctor's directions. I can do this now, without a doctor. They used a drug called hyoscine that did not taste. Still —"

"Not a dangerous amount, Rawlins — and at once — we are going fast."

In her relief she was close to tears.

"I will be careful, madam. But when we return you will need a doctor you can — trust."

"Doctor Carleton Thorne will be at the club at four. We can summon him the moment we arrive. Leave the captain to me. The moment that the opiate takes effect we will call it a faint. Is his valet aboard?"

"No, madam. I am valeting him. He did not wish —" The man paused.

"All the better. Then the task of attempting to revive him will be yours. If he can not be revived we shall have to turn about and make a quick run for a doctor. Even Bradport is out of the straight line. The club pier will be nearest. Hush! Here he comes. I can rely on you, Rawlins? It shall be the making of you!"

"I shall not fail you, madam. And if there is no laudanum to be found?"

The conversation had gone on in quick low tones as Rawlins set the table.

"If there is no laudanum, there will at any rate be headache powders, and I will ask for them. They can do damage enough if enough are used."

Higginham opened the cabin door.

"I am glad you have at least taken a seat," he said.

"Rawlins, hurry luncheon — and bring two cocktails at once. A Bronx for me, perhaps the same for you, Mrs. Carson?"

As Rawlins departed he sat down beside her, leaning toward her. She suddenly realized what had detained him during the moments she had filled with her talk to Rawlins. He had very evidently stopped to drink.

"Do you know," he said, "that you are the first woman who has refused to marry me?"

He let his eyes move from her bronze hair to her blue-shod feet. She was greatly to his taste, and his loosened tongue dwelt on the reasons for this. She received it in silence, and he paused. A conversation can not be sustained in that fashion. He tried a sudden sortie.

"You will like me better," he said, "after a week or two of only me."

If she had meant to answer she did not, for Rawlins returned. He took one glass from the tray, and handed it to Mrs. Carson. The other he held out to Higginham on the tray. Higginham had not been sure that Nadine would even consent to eat on his boat, and as she took her glass from Rawlins he confessed to relief. He raised his own to her.

"To your learning to like me!" he said and drank it at one draught. He frowned heavily.

"Gad, Rawlins, that had a funny taste! I thought you said you could make a cocktail. But you do not drink yours?"

"No," said Nadine, and put it down.

Higginham spoke to Rawlins.

"Get out!" he said.

Once more he leaned toward Nadine.

"You must take this matter more amiably," he said. "It is, after all, entirely your own suggestion; and besides, you can not help yourself. There is nothing you can do, save not to scream when I kiss you. But even that I will excuse, for nobody will pay any attention to it. You have much grace, now is the time to use it. Admit your defeat gracefully. It took good planning to bring it about."

A sudden new appreciation of the conventions and

decencies that guard women rose in Nadine. If one was a woman the price of adventure was too high. Even at this moment she must play her game without a flaw — a game of wit when her fingers ached for blows — a game of patience while this rage clamored for outlet; and she had laughed when he had first told her she was the only one aboard of all the arranged-for guests! Had that been only a half-hour ago? And now he spoke of a thing he called love. She heard the word on his lips with wonder.

“Do you think love is a bandit thing like this, that thinks only of its own desires and not of the woman loved; this cowardly enforcement of superior strategy? Love — you do not know its first letter!”

“Oh, yes I do.” He swept his arm around her as he leaned toward her chair, but there was something white and strange in his face, and at her sudden backward movement his head fell on the arm of the chair.

Rawlins came through the cabin door.

Mrs. Carson hung up the receiver of the telephone in the boat-house on the club pier, and sat down on the bench outside to wait for Carleton Thorne and his brother. At the foot of the stairway near the end of the pier, the launch waited with Rawlins and one of the sailors. Farther out the yacht was being anchored. During the few minutes she waited some

of the drawn look left Mrs. Carson's white face, yet even then as the doctor came to her, followed by Wrexford Thorne, he thought she looked ill and worn.

She spoke to them rapidly, with sudden little sharp gestures.

"That was why," she concluded, "I told you to bring what was needed for an overdose of laudanum. We gave it to him in the gin of the cocktail he ordered. But there has not been a moment since that I have not been distracted with anxiety for fear it was too much, or that he would really be in danger before we got him home."

"You gave it to him before lunch?"

"Yes. Rawlins says he had been drinking heavily. I will not go back to the yacht with you, but Rawlins will. And Doctor Thorne, do not tell him what it was, will you? Tell him he must quit drinking. Frighten him with apoplexy."

Carleton Thorne shook his head.

"It is you I shall frighten with threats," he said. "Rex, take her up to Amy, and say I have ordered her to go to bed, will you?"

He ran down the steps to the launch. Nadine looked at Wrexford Thorne, her eyes dark-circled in a dead-white face.

"That frightful ride home," she shuddered, "with

fear catching every breath we drew! I think I faced my whole life in those interminable hours. Even the captain, supposing I was the kind of woman who would go alone with this man on his yacht, spoke to me in tones of — that I — have never heard before. And all the while I was afraid I had killed him.”

Wrexford Thorne put out his hand to take her by the arm; and at her shuddering his face darkened.

“Somebody ought to kill him,” he said.

She paused a moment, looking at the angry face and measuring the bitter voice.

“No,” she murmured and her voice came softly and very sweet. “No, I have learned what I could in no other way. I shall never run away again, Expounder of the Law.”

CHAPTER XII

"Like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin
And both neglect."

CARLETON THORNE returned from Higginham's yacht with the news that its owner had been put to bed and was on a fair road to recovery. He added that the yacht had weighed anchor with the laudable intention of restoring Higginham to his own city.

"Where does he live?" asked Wrexford Thorne, grimly.

"He has lived in Chicago but his native city is Boston. You are not following him, Rex?"

"I am not; not just now, at any rate. But if he should ever again annoy —"

"Ah!" Carleton Thorne gave his brother a significant look. "As a champion of imperiled weakness, Rex —"

The rector made sharp answer.

"I was not needed for that. Mrs. Carson was quite able to handle the matter herself. Not even you were really needed. She was on shore and safe before you

were called in. As for the man, he will probably be all right again in a short time without any doctor's aid."

"Quite true, Rex. Therefore why disturb yourself further? If Higginham were to annoy Mrs. Carson again, doubtless she would again be able to handle the situation."

He gave his brother's angry face close attention. He had never seen Rex look just that way. He had a sudden wish that his brother were the rector of some other church than his present one — a church — he might as well confess his fear — in some other city than the one where Nadine Carson was a name to conjure with.

"Rex," he said, "did you not tell me that you had been approached as a possible selection for the bishopric of Massachusetts?"

"Yes."

"Would you take it if it were offered to you?"

"I do not know. My present work offers a larger opportunity — perhaps the largest that a man in my position could have."

"Yet there are advantages in being bishop of Massachusetts."

"There are. But it is not a thing to be decided without the utmost care and thought."

"How long do they give you to think over your decision?"

"As long as I need. I shall have to go to Boston presently to confer with them. When are you to be married, Carl?"

"In twenty-four days. Amy will stay here another fortnight with Mrs. Carson and her father. Then she will go to town for a week of final preparation, and then to the Cressler-Wallaces from whose house we are to be married. Where are Amy and Mrs. Carson, Rex?"

"They have followed your orders. Mrs. Carson has gone to bed."

"I think I will see her a moment. Did the archdeacon go back to town?"

The rector smiled a little.

"The archdeacon seems to have several weighty matters on his mind. He has deserted us in an effort to decide them."

The archdeacon had gone back to town to face what he believed to be a deeply serious situation for him. No man can believe in himself during the throes of indecision, and there are men to whom self-doubt is not the beginning of wisdom, but the end of achievement. As long as the archdeacon moved among the comfortable landmarks of that level country where decisions can be made by appeal to the conventions, there was nothing to sap his belief in himself. But this new country in which he had strayed in the wake

of Mrs. Carson's venturing feet, this country of strange situations and unlooked-for opportunities, presented occasions no conventions would cover; and the archdeacon found himself at every turn wondering what he ought to do, and either not deciding to do it, or blundering when he did.

There was no peace in such living. A hundred times he had made ready to return to the ways of peace, and a hundred times he had waited, unable to forego the stimulation of the unforeseen that depended on a man's own wits for handling, and yet hoping each time that the unforeseen would demand of him only those qualities he had developed by strict adherence to the conventional.

By returning to the ways of peace the archdeacon meant returning to that circle of friends, of whom the chief one was Mrs. Morris, where one met women who merely gave checks when they wished to be charitable, and did not, like Mrs. Carson, follow the unfortunate to the source of their troubles, into strange slums and crowded apartment stores, and night courts, and uncomfortable hospitals; women to whom Browning meant culture; who made calls, and organized sewing societies, and talked of every-day matters, and were married to excellent husbands, and were careful not to do the unbecoming thing.

The archdeacon was good at explanations, and he

had read up on Browning, and he could talk with real interest on every-day matters.

And not one of these things availed him with either Mrs. Carson herself, or the people who surrounded her. Yet because these strange men and women — who painted pictures, and edited magazines and wrote books, and built bridges, and spoke in the senate, and organized railroads — tolerated the very thing he represented, the archdeacon found a return to the ways of peace must be paid for. He must for ever after reckon with this thing he had learned but lately — boredom.

If he went back, he would be bored — bored by this very peace he clamored for. If he lost the opportunity of going back, he must spend the rest of his life developing his understanding and his resourcefulness — and the task looked hard. It was no wonder that a very devil of indecision tortured the archdeacon, and that even the small events of his clerical occupation began to be significant as they pushed him one way or the other.

Some of these small events were concerned with the work Mrs. Carson was doing with Wrexford Thorne; work the archdeacon frequently helped to carry out and that he was forced to confess became much more interesting when Mrs. Carson was included in it. In his indecision, this work was the one thing the archdeacon felt he could cling to with certainty. It was

good and needful work and even Mrs. Morris would have to confess the folly of eliminating Mrs. Carson from it when it was her money that was the real motive power of its accomplishment. In the bottom of his heart, the archdeacon felt that in reality it was the way Nadine handled her money, and the things she did and left undone, that contributed to the success of their work as much as the money itself. He knew that whenever he tried to do without her something was apt to go wrong.

He had now on his mind, among his other troubles, the case of a woman about whom he had consulted Nadine at Belle Terre, and for whom she had given him a check. The woman had disappeared with the money and the archdeacon was at a loss to know what he ought to do. He awaited Nadine's return to town with impatience. Yet when she did come, she was much absorbed in the arrangements for Amy Wallace's wedding, and the archdeacon never seemed to find her at home.

Then when Miss Wallace's preparations were finished and she left town for Bradport where Cressler, Mrs. Wallace's country place, was being prepared for her wedding, Nadine was much taken up by important matters that had resulted from Judge Wallace's investigation of Harding's previous conduct of the Carson estate.

It threatened, the archdeacon was told, to get into court and kept Mrs. Carson in town to the last moment, when she had hoped to be at Cressler with Amy.

The archdeacon, worried over the lost money and his inability to locate the woman who had taken it, concluded to consult Wrexford Thorne, only to find that the rector had gone that morning to Boston for an important conference. The archdeacon did not learn what the conference was about from Thorne's assistant rector, but he was quite able to believe that its importance must be considerable if it took the rector away the day before his brother's wedding, with no surety of his return in time for it.

Judge Wallace himself finally called the archdeacon on the telephone to tell him that in view of the uncertainty of Wrexford Thorne's return from Boston in time for the wedding, the archdeacon might have to perform the wedding ceremony without him. They were all much disappointed, especially Carleton, but it could not be helped.

The archdeacon inquired after Mrs. Carson.

"She is very much occupied, I am sorry to say," said Judge Wallace. "She will go out to the wedding to-morrow morning; but she asked me to tell you that she could spare you a half-hour after dinner to-night, if you wish to see her. I believe you do."

The archdeacon admitted that he did, and having hung up the receiver, set about hunting up the morning trains to Bradport. It was to be a noon wedding, and after one reached Bradport, there were several miles to drive to Cressler.

After dinner he came out into the street from the apartment, where he paid a rent he could not quite afford for comforts he could not quite forego, and found Percy Jeffrey at the door in his motor.

"Were you coming to see me?" asked the archdeacon.

"No, I was on an errand connected with the wedding to-morrow noon. But I shall be glad to take you wherever you are going. Get in!"

The archdeacon named Mrs. Carson's house as his destination, and then, as he saw Jeffrey smiling, he hastily — almost too hastily — inquired after the health of Jeffrey's sister, Mrs. Morris.

"She has a frightful indigestion," said Jeffrey.

As he imparted the information blithely, the archdeacon met it with the silence he opposed to all inconsiderate levity.

"She has had" — and Jeffrey now let concern riot in his voice — "to eat her own words."

"I beg pardon!" said the archdeacon.

"No, don't," said Jeffrey, "and I'll tell you how it happened: Yesterday, Selina" — Selina was Mrs.

Morris' Christian name—"telephoned out to Bradport, to Mrs. Cressler-Wallace, that she positively would not go out to Miss Wallace's wedding—even though Mrs. Wallace was her oldest friend—if Mrs. Carson was going. As Mrs. Carson was quite indispensable there seemed nothing to do but to give up Selina's presence at the wedding to-morrow. And then, this morning, I told Selina that in case of Wrexford Thorne's inability to get back from Boston in time for the wedding, you were to perform the ceremony. I left her telephoning Cressler's wife that she had changed her mind, and would go. She said she had come to believe her sentiment in the matter was not charitable, and she had decided to go, to prove that she was not governed by the lower things. I offer you my congratulations, Archdeacon. It is wonderful that even the mention of your name should remove a woman from the plane of the lower things."

The archdeacon, having no idea at all what answer to make to this narration, held his peace, and Jeffrey stopped the machine at Mrs. Carson's door.

"It would complicate it," said Jeffrey, "if now Mrs. Carson declined to go because of Selina."

"Surely she would not do that!" said the archdeacon anxiously.

But Jeffrey only laughed, and left the archdeacon pausing on the broad marble steps, once more facing

the problem of the two great forces that balance the world: on one side the force that keeps men in the path others have trod, urging on them tried compromises; on the other side the force that draws them to unknown ways for the sake of new knowledge.

Why these two forces should be ever at war, the archdeacon could not say. For what Mrs. Morris represented in his life of the conservative he had a deep respect, yet for what Mrs. Carson meant of the insurgent he had a feeling he could not name, and that yet seemed stronger than respect. Why could not a man combine the two? There were surely some men who did.

Yet only a week ago, Mrs. Morris had called this desire of his to make such a combination weakness. She had seriously talked to him about it — using Mrs. Carson as a text. She had told him that the time had come for him to make a choice between them; she had showed him what choosing Mrs. Carson would mean in the world's opinion of him, and in his own character. And she had done it so thoroughly, and so plainly for his own good, and it was so against her desire to intrude, that the archdeacon had been almost wrought up to the point of casting out this devil of indecision that made a purgatory of his vanity.

For the archdeacon was not of humble mind. Mrs. Carson herself had once said that he was designed for

a bulwark of the conventional. He was large, and conspicuously broad in build. He was impressive in manner. He spoke with care and weightiness, and in the earlier days, before he had set foot in Mrs. Carson's disconcerting world there had seemed small appeal from what he said. This mannerism, joined to his fine forehead and his excellent shoulders, had won him much praise.

There had been a time when the praise had been a spur to him; but, too often repeated, and too easily won, it had become the Delilah to which many a young Samson has sacrificed his strength, and efforts that might have been broad with spiritual significance turned into the sluggish acceptance of social approval, until the consciousness of his excellence tinged the cadence of his voice, and the wave of his hand, and the measure of his tread. If what Mrs. Morris had said to him were true, it was time, indeed, that he ceased standing before Mrs. Carson's door, if only for the sake of that excellence he hoped to preserve.

Yet, as he waited on the door-step of the great house, with its lights streaming softly from behind silken curtains, the very atmosphere of the place was a pleasure to him. He liked the solemn man who opened the door for him, and took his hat and gloves. He liked the deferential way in which he said: "The library, sir."

Only Mrs. Carson's intimates entered her library, and the man's very intonation conferred an honor as he opened the library doors for him, and closed them softly behind him.

The archdeacon believed he liked this library better than any room he had ever been in. Not for its hundreds of books that all looked used, nor its paintings that all told stories, but for its rosy and golden glow; its absence of things that would tumble over easily; its wonderfully comfortable places to sit down, with the lights behind you, and the books before you. He looked about him as he waited, to see if he could tell what Mrs. Carleton Thorne had meant when she said: "Nadine's library where Vibert's paintings wink at Gleyre's."

There was a Galatea, full-blown in beauty, just born in innocence. There was no winking there. The *Lost Illusions* over the mantel was too tragic to wink. Before him hung a wonderfully-colored painting of a girl held by a man in a boat, sailing on a sea haunted by beckoning spirits. The girl's face was blind ecstasy itself; the man's brooding fear. The archdeacon looked at it, forgetful of his quest, wondering what it could be about.

There were no pictures to wonder over in Mrs. Morris' drawing-room. She had no library, and her walls were not tellers of tales. There were land-

scapes, and an Indian or two. There were some mountains, and there was Venice, and a lady on a balcony looking down at tall hollyhocks.

It seemed curious to the archdeacon, as he thought of these things, that he had found no defense of Mrs. Carson to offer to Mrs. Morris when she had importuned him to see clearly the direction he was taking. He had not even had an explanation of it all.

One never had to explain to Mrs. Carson. He could not imagine her forcing choices on a man, or bothering about what anybody else was saying about him. He sighed, and before him came the comfort of life, with a woman to whom explanations were not necessary. He let the thought carry him far, so far it suddenly revealed to him strange things that he had not supposed possible of himself at his present age.

The dignified Rawlins, at the door, opened it again to let Mrs. Carson enter, and before the archdeacon caught sight of her she had seen the look with which he was regarding the girl whose face glowed with ecstasy, and the man haunted by fear.

"What is your explanation of it, Archdeacon?" she asked.

"What is its name?" he said.

"*Whither!* You see she doesn't care 'whither', but he—I think he is still burdened with the great masculine conflict."

"What is it?" asked the archdeacon.

"You should be able to tell me better than I you. Look at his Puritan face. I should say it was, with him, the conflict between the thing he ought to like and the thing he likes because he ought not to."

This had the effect of rendering the archdeacon quite dumb, and so Nadine continued:

"I am glad you came promptly, for Judge Wallace has just telephoned me that I must go over some important papers to-night that he has to use in the case against Harding, my discharged manager. It will take us several hours, I am afraid. He will be here in half an hour. I am so sorry that with Amy being married to-morrow her father and I have to work to-night."

"In that case," said the archdeacon, "I will immediately go into the matter that brought me. This woman whom you gave me the money to help — you recall the one with the scar on her face — she has disappeared."

"I did not see her. You remember I let you manage this affair yourself, but I believe I did caution you against giving her the money outright."

"She seemed to believe," said the archdeacon, "that if she could get a good lawyer to try her case she would be able to return the money. She put it quite clearly: A repudiated marriage under a false name, with a very rich man; a compromise out of court,

when they bought her off for the sake of the man's reputation, when he was about to contract a real marriage with a woman in his own class."

"And she thought that she had a chance to prove, after all, that hers was a real marriage?" asked Nadine.

"Not unaided, against all the money of the man's family."

"It might be so," said Nadine to him gently, "but it has all the marks of a made-up story. It would have been better to have engaged a lawyer for her than to have given her money to do so. You say she has disappeared?"

"It is curious," said the archdeacon, "since you just spoke of him, that the last time I saw her, she was with this Mr. Harding, who used to be your attorney. And then when I went to her place, she had gone. In the house where she rooms they said she had taken a position for a couple of weeks, with a family in the country that needed extra help for a house party, and that she would be back."

"Well, then, why do you not wait?"

"You see—you see, I gave her the money—and I was not sure of her coming back. One of the things I came to ask you was if you thought I had better inquire about her from Mr. Harding."

"If you are anxious about her, I should do so. But

you can not rely on what he says. It does not sound, to me, like a truthful story. It is more likely a scheme to get money — from you — and from the man, or his wife — for I suppose there is a wife."

Rawlins appeared hesitatingly at the library door.

"Madam," he said, "I am very sorry to disturb you, but Bradport has telephoned twice, and insists on your being asked if you will speak to them. They say it is important. We have refused several other telephone calls, but they insist."

"Let me have them on the library telephone, Rawlins." She moved to the desk telephone. "It is probably some of the Cressler-Wallaces wanting me to bring something or somebody out at the last minute to the wedding to-morrow," she said to the archdeacon.

The archdeacon watched her as she sat down, and took off the receiver.

"Yes, this is Mrs. Carson."

He saw her hand suddenly catch the arm of the chair, and her face grow tense.

"And this occurred but two hours ago?" she said.

She waited a moment, and then spoke again.

"But you told me that he tried last week to get away, and that you had left him only his linen clothes, so that he could not repeat it. He can not go far out of the grounds in white linen — a man his size — as conspicuous as he is — without being found."

She paused again to listen, and then asked about the watching of trains and ferry-boats across the Sound to the Long Island shore.

"I should have thought," she said, "that you would have redoubled your precautions when you knew that somebody was sending him letters through some employé in the house."

There was another silence. The color seemed to have left her face. Then she answered.

"I will call you at ten to-night, and again at twelve, unless you call me. And to-morrow morning I will come out with Judge Wallace, unless you have found Mr. Carson. No, I was coming to Cressler, anyhow — four miles from Bradport — to-morrow morning, — to Mrs. Cressler-Wallace's. It is incredible that with all these precautions, he could have arranged to get away without help. Somebody else must be in it. I will see what can be done at this end. Judge Wallace will be here in a few minutes, and I will have him talk to you."

She listened to the answer, and then she hung up the receiver. The archdeacon rose, and she started, as if she had quite forgotten him.

"You heard?" she said quietly. "It seems impossible that a man so well watched could get away — unless there was real negligence."

The archdeacon hesitated. He did not like to call this insane man her husband.

"You mean — Mr. Carson?" he asked.

"Yes. Oh, I hope they find him! His very semblance of sanity makes him dangerous. You might meet him on the street, and never guess how a chance offense might rouse him to frightful retaliation. He has the strength of —" She paused over some remembered terror, and shuddered.

"He will be found," said the archdeacon. "An insane man can not go about as he chooses. At any rate, he will not come here."

"I do not know — he may — there is no doubt some plan behind it."

The archdeacon looked about him, and all the charm of the glowing room fled before the atmosphere of this fear. He had a sudden vision of Mrs. Morris' drawing-room, where there was nothing behind which lay a story, not even a picture.

"You will want to make some immediate arrangements," he said. "I will not detain you. Good night."

Rawlins closed the library door after him, and handed him his hat and gloves.

"There has been some woman determined to see Mrs. Carson, sir, that I have just told it was impos-

sible. She is lingering a bit about the steps, sir ; but you'll doubtless take no notice of her. We are much bothered by them, sir, since it leaked out that Mrs. Carson likes to help them."

"Very well, Rawlins. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

Rawlins closed the outer door swiftly, and the archdeacon stopped in the vestibule to put on his gloves. As he stood there, he saw a woman at the foot of the steps. He hesitated, and as he did so, Judge Wallace crossed the street to the Carson steps, and the archdeacon saw the woman turn a face bearing a long scar across the cheek to the judge. In his amazement, the archdeacon took refuge in the only resource his unaccustomed wits left him in this strange country ungoverned by the conventions. He stood still, and was silent.

Then he heard the judge say: "So you have appeared again. What are you doing on Mrs. Carson's steps?"

"I have never called her Mrs. Carson," the girl said sullenly. "The name belongs to me."

The archdeacon felt a thrill of excitement quiver along his nerves, that was quite unlike anything he had ever felt before. A week ago he had given this girl Mrs. Carson's money. He pulled himself together. Judge Wallace was answering her.

"Some very competent lawyers decided otherwise," the judge said curtly.

"Yes — out of court," said the girl. "It is time to see what some judge not quite so competent might decide."

The judge considered this phrase a moment.

"You have evidently been talking the matter over with some lawyer."

"Evidently."

"Well, then, why are you here? Is it blackmail?"

"No, not with her. I have just found out that it has been she who has looked after my — my sister all summer. I will give value received for anything I ask of her."

"Suppose you come and see me about it to-morrow at my office. I do not think you can see Mrs. Carson to-night."

"I will not be here to-morrow. I've got to go back to the country to-night. I had to come in this afternoon for something special. I can not stay. I am working in the country."

"What became of the money paid you by Carson, that you should be working in the country?"

"It is gone."

"You want money of Mrs. Carson?"

"I told you I had something to sell. But it takes more time than I have to sell it. I've telephoned, and

I've come here, and this very fine lady, who has my place, can't be seen, and can't use the telephone. All right! I can sell it elsewhere, and to a higher bidder."

She left him suddenly, and swung around the corner of the street. But the archdeacon had no idea of letting her escape. He flung himself from the vestibule, where he had been hidden, in a fine haste that was stopped at the bottom step by the indignant judge.

"Upon my word!" said the judge breathlessly, as he found who it was he held within his grip.

The archdeacon stopped for one of his excellent explanations, and the time in which he might have caught the girl passed.

"I could not very well just walk down on you after you had begun to talk about such things! Why, I gave that girl money of Mrs. Carson's only last week! W-what d-did she mean?" The archdeacon stammered in his excitement.

"You heard her," said the judge, with an accent that, in a calmer time, would have been exceedingly disagreeable to the archdeacon.

"Is there — is there — any chance —"

"The chance of a lively scandal — that's all."

"This girl is not — not really — his wife?"

"She has not proved it."

"Could she?"

"Not likely," answered the judge. "Good night."

The judge passed into the house. The archdeacon heard Rawlins, at the door, say: "The library, sir," in the same deferential tones that had been used for himself. He heard the door close again, but he still stood on the steps, his mind peopled with unwonted guests that searched for room and clamored for recognition. Verily, the safe and level country of convention was far off from him, and he walked hand in hand with an insurgent force that knew nothing of the conservative.

Suppose—suppose this appealing woman behind the door that had just shut him out—this woman with the low voice, and the haunting blue eyes, and the slender soft body, and the wonderful understanding, should after all—could marry! The archdeacon moved slowly down the street, gripped by this thought; stirred by it to depths he had had no knowledge of; swung high on the crest of this wave of insurgence; grasping at large things that all his life had been denied him.

And then, down he went into the trough of the wave, and from the shore of the level land he had deserted the conventions gibed at him. Before she could marry, there would be a lively scandal, indeed! The city and the country would ring with it. What could he have to do with such things? He was—a priest

and a — gentleman! His ways were far from these. And all this money that made her such a power — what would happen to it? The archdeacon sighed. Was there no way for a man to be rid of this devil of indecision?

When the archdeacon found, the next morning, that he had missed the only morning train that stopped at Bradport, he called it luck. As a matter of fact, it was absorption; for even after a night's sleep, he was still weighing balances and measuring possibilities.

Whatever the name of the thing that had caused him to miss his train, its result was not pleasant. Wrexford Thorne had not returned from Boston, and the archdeacon had to telephone to Cressler to ask what could be done, for the next train would bring him there ten minutes later than the time set for the ceremony he was to perform, without counting the necessity to dress.

Mrs. Morris, relieving Mrs. Wallace of telephone calls, received his message, and there was a brief consultation while he held the wire. Then Mrs. Morris, in a voice that the archdeacon felt quiver down his spine, bade him telephone Mrs. Carson, whose machine was going to make a record run to Cressler for the wedding.

"Has not Mrs. Carson already gone?" asked the archdeacon in his surprise.

"She is not expected until just before the ceremony," said Mrs. Morris sharply. "But the ceremony will not take place without her, as Judge Wallace has also been detained with her and Miss Wallace would hardly be married without her father. But perhaps you have later information about Mrs. Carson's plans than anybody else."

"Not at all!" said the archdeacon hastily, but even as he answered, the sound of a hung-up receiver clicked over the wire.

The archdeacon sat in the telephone booth at the station and pondered. He did not like to intrude on Mrs. Carson who was probably anxious about her husband, or on Judge Wallace, but he did not see what else he could do.

Judge Wallace himself took the archdeacon's message over the telephone and brought him Mrs. Carson's answer. The judge told him that Mr. Carson had not been found, but they were sure he must be in the neighborhood, as the trains had all been watched, and he had not left, either that way, or by boat. He concluded briefly that they would stop at the station for the archdeacon in a few minutes.

Mrs. Carson was also late, and the run into Connecticut was, indeed, a record one. The archdeacon feared for his neck, as he sat beside Judge Wallace. He ate and breathed dust; he could talk not at all, and

could listen only now and then, and he arrived a scant thirty minutes before the time for the ceremony, breathless and dusty beyond description.

They were hastily assigned to rooms at the back of the house, and there the archdeacon's badly-begun day grew worse. For he found that his room had no bath of its own, and that he would have to traverse a long hall, and turn a corner into a short hall, before he could find a tub to remove the unspeakable dust of that frightful ride.

He had been invited, with the house guests, to stay overnight. He unpacked his grip of fresh linen, laid his long black cassock and his crisp white surplice on the bed. Beside it he put the white silk stole Mrs. Morris had given him for Christmas. Then he got into his bath robe, and carefully brushed the dust off his frock-coat and his trousers that were white with it. He put his head out into the hall. It was empty, and so he hurried through the long hall, and round the corner into the short hall.

Tubbed and refreshed, the archdeacon returned in haste round the corner, and up the long hall. Half-way there a door suddenly opened, and Mrs. Morris, dressed for the wedding with absolute precision but nervous in manner, appeared, nearly upsetting the archdeacon.

"You!" she gasped.

The archdeacon noted, with surprise, how much more attractive the lady was a trifle distraught than entirely placid. Then he recalled his bath robe, and, with a "How do you do, Mrs. Morris?" he prepared to flee.

But the lady detained him.

"I have seen the oddest thing," she said. "All these rooms in the back open on this up-stairs veranda. You see how the house is built, close to the hill in the back, so that the woods are nearly level with the veranda at the second floor. While I was dressing, one of the maids came out of a window to the porch, and spoke to somebody in the woods. Do you think the presents ought to be watched?"

"It is some household matter. I think I would not bother until after the wedding is over. A wedding ought to go smoothly. You must excuse me, I have barely time to get ready. I had a frightful ride out."

Mrs. Morris smiled at this intelligence. Across the hall from his own room, they both heard Mrs. Percy Jeffrey offer to hook Mrs. Carson's gown. Mrs. Morris paused a moment to notice the fact of the easily-heard voice, and to watch the archdeacon cover the space between her and his own room with a speed she had not believed possible for so large a figure. Then she passed on down the hall.

The archdeacon locked his door and hastily began

his toilet. He had exactly ten minutes left. And then a curious thing befell. On the chair where he had left his carefully folded trousers there were no trousers.

The archdeacon stared at the chair. He looked at the bed, where his cassock lay, and then his eyes came back to the chair. He recalled distinctly that he had put them on the chair — carefully, because he had not brought other clothes with him for the one night's stay. He looked all over the room, leisurely, at first, and then, as the minutes passed, and he heard, below, the murmur of assembling guests, and the music that precedes the wedding march, he looked hastily, and finally with panic. He looked as a man will when he is in a hurry — twice in the same place — and in places where no sane man would put his only pair of trousers.

He kept on looking long after he was sure that they were not there, and it was not until he stood desperately in the middle of the room, his forehead bedewed with perspiration, his eyes still searching the room, that he remembered that his watch and his wallet were in the trousers.

Meantime, a hasty step echoed in the hallway, and Percy Jeffrey rapped at his door.

"They are all ready, and waiting for you, Archdeacon," said Percy. "Hurry! The procession is

forming. Mrs. Wallace sent me to see if I could help you."

The archdeacon unlocked his door, and Jeffrey beheld him in amazement.

"Man alive! The bride is at the top of the stairway, waiting to go down! And you in your bath robe!"

"I have lost my pantaloons!" said the archdeacon, in tones that would have moved anybody but Percy Jeffrey.

"You've lost your pantaloons!" echoed Percy. "Why, how can a man lose his pantaloons?"

"Well, I've lost mine."

"For heaven's sake, put on another pair, then! They are playing the bridal music!"

"I haven't any other pair!" The archdeacon's mind was utterly unable to cope with so unheard-of a situation. He gazed blankly at Percy Jeffrey.

"I only wore one pair out," he explained patiently.

"Oh!" said Percy. He measured the archdeacon with his eyes.

He himself was tall, but not that tall, and he was so much slimmer that his own clothes would be impossible for the archdeacon, whose waist had long ago disappeared. Moreover, Percy did not believe there was a man in the house, even among the servants, whose clothes would fit the archdeacon.

"But I'll try," he said, hurrying out.

'And then more footsteps came down the hallway; Judge Wallace with his cousin Cressler and Mrs. Morris half the hallway behind them. Jeffrey came into the room.

"Amy is getting worried, Archdeacon," said Judge Wallace. "Everybody is waiting. What is the matter?"

"The matter!" said the archdeacon. "The matter is that I have lost my trousers."

"Lost your trousers!"

"My trousers — yes — my trousers!" said the archdeacon.

"Well, by gad!" said Cressler Wallace. "What a thing to lose!"

He gazed on the archdeacon with dismay.

"Where did you lose them?"

"Right here in this room!" burst forth the archdeacon, his patience finally giving way.

As this conversation occurred at the open door, the archdeacon's eye lighted suddenly on Mrs. Carson, standing in her own doorway across the hall, with a look that the closing of his own door by Cressler Wallace, preparatory to an immediate search of the room, prevented him from realizing.

"Oh," said Mrs. Jeffrey, "you might have taken more time! My, but Mrs. Wallace will be angry! To

be all ready on time for a wedding, to have the guests waiting, and the music at the march, and the thing held up because the rector has lost —”

Mrs. Morris reached them.

“What is the matter?” said Mrs. Morris breathlessly.

Mrs. Carson gave the lady a level look.

“Do you think you can stand it?” she asked softly.

Mrs. Morris ignored her.

“Laura,” she said, “can you tell me what causes this unheard-of delay?”

“The archdeacon — won’t you please tell her, Mrs. Carson.”

“The archdeacon,” said Mrs. Carson gravely, “has lost his trousers.”

“Lost his —”

Mrs. Morris could not quite manage it. She filled her pause with infinite dismay. This was superseded by cold respectability itself. Was a gentleman’s apparel to be discussed by ladies? Yet at the stairway stood the bride waiting the signal. Mrs. Morris lost her head.

“How could you know such a thing?” she demanded of Mrs. Carson.

“How could you fail to know it?” countered Mrs. Carson.

Mrs. Jeffrey came between them.

"He has been telling it loud enough to hear it in any of these rooms about him, Mrs. Morris."

"But where, Laura, did he lose a — them?" said Mrs. Morris to Mrs. Jeffrey.

"In his own room — just now."

Mrs. Carson looked out the hall window at the veranda and the woods beyond.

"Some woman ought to help those men in there," she said. "Men can never find things. They are very likely right there, and they do not see them."

"I will get Mrs. Wallace," said Mrs. Morris, sweeping away from them down the hall.

"Oh," said Mrs. Jeffrey. "A little thing like the huge archdeacon's trousers — and overlooked."

"She overlooked — a — them," mimicked Mrs. Carson.

Percy Jeffrey came toward them with one of the servants. Both men had their arms full of trousers. Percy's face, as he turned it to the two women, bore a shameless grin. He shook his head.

"We are all too thin," he said sadly. "Poor bride!"

They closed the archdeacon's door behind them, as Judge Wallace came out.

"I think we shall have to go on," said Mrs. Carson to Mrs. Jeffrey, "or we shall seem to spy." She turned to the judge. "I will go to the up-stairs tele-

phone, in the sewing room, and see what news they have for me at the sanatorium, while you tell Amy. Then I will join you down-stairs. There will be time evidently."

They met Mrs. Cressler-Wallace hurrying to the archdeacon's room, as they left the hall. She was flushed and angry. This wedding represented patient preparation. It was a shame that its smoothness should be upset by such a thing. She bore down on the archdeacon's room with the anger of the outraged hostess, and her husband opened the door to her knock.

The archdeacon, still in his bath robe, stood despairingly before a bed covered with trousers — black ones, gray ones, striped, and checked trousers — and not one pair would so much as go on him.

Cressler Wallace was still explaining volubly that trousers could not disappear from a man's room in that fashion. The archdeacon's wrath was rising.

"They never did before, in any house that I have ever been in but yours, Mr. Wallace," said the archdeacon angrily, as Mrs. Wallace entered. "There is a thief here at this wedding."

"It won't be a wedding if you don't hurry," said Mrs. Wallace hastily.

"What would a thief want with your trousers?" said Cressler Wallace.

"My wallet was in the back pocket that buttons. He probably did not want to take time to take it out!"

"But, Archdeacon," said the distracted hostess, "can you not put on *something*? The musicians have played the bridal chorus twice. Nobody will notice *you*."

"In that case, he might as well go in his bath robe," said Percy glibly.

Mrs. Wallace gave him a withering look. Then she turned again to the stricken priest.

"Your cassock, Archdeacon! With your cassock on, it does not matter if—" Mrs. Wallace paused.

The two men took long breaths of relief. The archdeacon gave his hostess a distracted look.

"Sure!" said Cressler Wallace. "Sure thing! What's all this fuss about, anyhow? I never thought of his uniform. Good for you, Anita! It takes a woman for such things. Come on, Archdeacon! Go out, Anita! We'll have him down in no time. The thing buttons clear down to your ankles, doesn't it, Archdeacon? Well, then!"

Down-stairs in the drawing-room with its marriage bell and its prie-dieu, its roses and its waiting guests, Mrs. Carson, after a brief talk with Amy, joined Mrs. Jeffrey. Behind her, Mrs. Morris shifted her position slightly.

Mrs. Carson shook her head at Mrs. Jeffrey's question.

"I have heard nothing further about the archdeacon. It is too bad Wrexford Thorne could not be here."

"Yes, it is. Percy simply hates weddings, but he says that the archdeacon has saved the day for him."

"It is not often that anybody but the bride is interesting. There goes the march. He must have found them."

Presently, from the back hall, Carleton Thorne, preceded by the archdeacon, entered the drawing-room, and they made their way to the prie-dieu and the bell of roses.

"What do you think?" whispered Mrs. Jeffrey as the music swelled for the entrance of the bride, misty-veiled and soft-eyed.

"I think that Monna Vanna and her long mantle were not a circumstance," said Nadine, with anxious eyes on the bride.

"Percy," said Mrs. Morris to her brother, as the long line filed before the bride and bridegroom to offer their congratulations, "who was Monna Vanna?"

"She was the lady who saved her city by wearing a long coat," said Percy.

"What had the long coat to do with it?"

Percy gave his sister a quick look, and lowered his voice to mystery.

"Nobody knows for sure. It was supposed to be all she wore—but not even Maeterlinck, who told the story, knew—for she did not take it off."

"That," said Mrs. Morris with triumphant disgust, "is what Mrs. Carson called the archdeacon!"

"Oh, by Jove!" said Percy.

The archdeacon returned to his room. He was frightfully warm, and he did not recall ever having been so angry. He had all but fallen over the foolish white footstool under the more foolish white rose bell, and as he had saved himself by a hasty clutch at the bridegroom's arm, he had caught Percy Jeffrey's eye, and the remembrance of it increased his anger. Moreover, it was one o'clock, and he had not eaten since seven.

His food was more than important to him—it was a necessity. But he had either to go to the wedding breakfast in his cassock, which would be so conspicuous as to necessitate explanations, or he had to eat in his room, or go without—and none of these contingencies appealed to him. Explanations came easily to him, but none that would successfully cover this case. He did not feel that he could go much longer without food. And down-stairs was a gay wedding

party that any man interested in social matters would have enjoyed. It had, indeed, been an evil day for him.

Percy Jeffrey broke his reflections at this point.

"Archdeacon, I am sent to demand your presence at the feast. What makes you skulk in your tent like this? We have been looking for you every place."

The archdeacon had removed his surplice. He looked at himself in the glass.

"I do not like to come down in my cassock," he said.

"It looks very well on you. And nobody could tell —"

The archdeacon's face lightened.

"Do you mean to say that nobody knows?"

But, much as he would like to have said it, Percy could not quite manage it.

"Very well," said the archdeacon, with dignity. "I shall stay here."

"But you can not stay here for ever!"

"I can stay until I get a pair of pantaloons," said the badgered priest. "Unless somebody else is in a hurry to be married."

"Very well; I will have your portion of the wedding-cake sent up," said Percy.

As he left the room, the archdeacon considered who could be sent to his apartment for his clothes. Even

his keys had been in the missing trousers. The janitor would have to help. The room was very warm, and very lonely. The guests were feasting far off in the front of the house; yet as the archdeacon opened his door to get more air, he could hear a distracting murmur of laughter and music rise faintly, mocking at his predicament. His anger waxed.

He turned to go back into his room, and as he did so, he caught sight of something curious about Mrs. Carson's door. It was open about two inches, and watching him through the crack were a pair of shifting nervous eyes. The eyes were far up the door. They belonged to a tall man.

The archdeacon stared. The perspiration once more bathed his forehead. If this was the thief, he ought to rouse the house. And where else would a thief go, if he came informed—and he had heard that they did—but to the room of the wealthiest guest, the guest whose jewels were famous? And he would go there just at the time when everybody else in the house, guests and servants, were engaged with the wedding breakfast.

Yet if he roused the house the poor bride's wedding breakfast would be spoiled. Dimly the archdeacon felt he had already done enough to disturb the smoothness of the wedding. Long habits of inepti-

tude in the face of the unexpected, seized him. The archdeacon stood still, looking at the nervous shifting eyes.

The door opened a little wider. And then, as the door opened, the archdeacon caught sudden sight of his own trousers on the man's long legs — his trousers belted in folds around a slimmer waist than his own.

And all the wrath that had been growing within the archdeacon blazed into a white-hot flame; all the discomfort and distress of the last hour culminated in one mad spring of primal rage upon this creature in the doorway, that had brought him to this pass. And as he sprang on him, something queer happened to the face at the door. The upper lip was drawn back over teeth slightly flecked with blood, and sounds like the snarling of an angry dog lashed the air.

The door swung wide, and, even as he grappled with the man, the archdeacon saw the door shut them both in the room, and heard a key click in the lock. He had no chance to look, for long fingers, with the knuckles gnawed and bleeding, were tugging at his throat, and the snarling went on; yet the archdeacon knew that somebody else was in the room and knew it was a woman.

Struggling as he was, every muscle defending the very citadels of his life as those long fingers pressed his throat, the archdeacon found time to wonder if it was Mrs. Carson herself who was there behind him. Then, as those strangling hands grew closer, he heard the woman cry:

"It's a priest, Collie. Don't kill him! It's a priest! No good luck will ever come to you if you harm him. Can't you see his gown? It's a priest, I tell you! You shan't kill him!"

And the last thought the archdeacon had, as darkness came on him, was that it was not Mrs. Carson. It was the woman to whom he had given Mrs. Carson's money; the woman who had stood upon her steps last night; the woman who had called herself — why, she had called herself Mrs. Carson!

The bride and bridegroom, powdered with rice and rose leaves, escaped on the early train to New York. Judge Wallace was ready to take Mrs. Carson to interview the doctor at the sanatorium. She paused at the stairway to ask Mrs. Percy Jeffrey to come up with her to help change her gown. She had not brought her maid.

"What," said Mrs. Jeffrey, "has become of the archdeacon?"

"He would not come to the wedding breakfast in

his cassock," said Percy. "So it was served in his room, and I dare say he is up there now. With a bride to get off, we forgot about him; all of us except Selina. She has been stewing about him ever since the wedding. There comes Selina now, and I'll lay any wager she asks about the archdeacon."

Mrs. Carson and Mrs. Jeffrey did not wait for Mrs. Morris, but as they turned the corner of the stairway, they heard Percy assuring his sister that the archdeacon had been fed, and was at that moment cutting a new suit out of his old cassock, and that if she really wanted to help the poor man, she had better get her thimble, and organize a sewing society.

Percy was still expounding the excellences of this idea to a very indignant sister when Cressler Wallace came down the stairs to him.

"Cress, has the archdeacon got his new suit done?" asked Percy.

"Mrs. Carson," said Cressler Wallace, "can not open her door. It is locked from the inside. She is positive she did not lock it. I knocked on the archdeacon's door across the hall, to get him to help me force the door — he is so large — but he is not in his room. His luncheon is on a tray, untouched."

"You don't suppose, Selina," said Percy, "that the archdeacon has locked himself in Mrs. Carson's room?"

"Percy!" gasped Mrs. Morris, her carefully tinted face suffused with real color. "There are times when I wonder if you really are my brother."

"I wonder," said Percy gaily, "if they are the same times that I am also in doubt?"

"Percy, let Selina alone for a minute, and you and the judge come up-stairs with me, and see what ails Mrs. Carson's door."

"Oh, she probably locked it, and forgot," said Percy.

"The key is on the inside," said Cressler Wallace.

The three men looked at each other.

"You can go out of the hall window to the veranda and into Mrs. Carson's window," said Cressler Wallace. "One of us can stay at the door in the hall, and the other.—"

"I'll go through the window, and unlock the door for Mrs. Carson," said Judge Wallace. "Why didn't you say so at first? That's no trouble."

"I will go with you," said Percy.

"And I will go up also, and wait in the hall," said Mrs. Morris.

"Well," said Percy, "with one lost archdeacon, and one lost archdeacon's trousers, this is the most exciting wedding I ever attended. If the archdeacon is lost on Mrs. Carson's account, Selina will lose her mind."

In the up-stairs hall, Mrs. Carson and Mrs. Jeffrey were joined by Cressler Wallace and Mrs. Morris. They heard the other men cross the tin floor of the veranda. The window must have been opened, for there was no sound of raising it. Then there was a long pause.

Cressler Wallace knocked on the door, his impatience losing bounds. Steps crossed the floor, and Percy unlocked the door.

Judge Wallace was bending over a figure on the floor, from the head of which he had drawn Mrs. Carson's long, blue silk motor coat.

"Percy, get me water," said Judge Wallace. "Cressler, find me some brandy, will you?"

"It is the archdeacon!" said Mrs. Morris, but her eyes fixed themselves on Mrs. Carson, and not on the face on the floor, with the dark print of fingers on its throat. "How did he get in there?"

"Percy," said the judge, loosening the clerical collar, "take your sister out, and close the door."

Percy had to use main force to close the door. He did it quietly but with entire efficiency.

"You have no right to treat me so," said Mrs. Morris. "I have a right to know about this."

"Can't you see there has been some kind of a fight?"

"But the door was locked from the inside."

"The man may be killed. I'd advise you to go to your own room. There is no use in your attracting the other guests."

Cressler Wallace returned with brandy, and they bathed the archdeacon's forehead with it. The judge at length succeeded in forcing a little down his throat. Presently the archdeacon sighed, with a long labored breath. And as the judge went on with his work, mumbled words rose to the archdeacon's lips. The judge gave him more brandy, and the archdeacon's mind took up the thread of consciousness where it had laid it down.

"It is the woman with the scar on her face, that I tried to help with money. It is the woman who said she was Mrs. Carson; the woman who said our Mrs. Carson was not a real wife."

Mrs. Carson drew back, with startled eyes on Judge Wallace. He shook his head at her. Dimly the archdeacon perceived denial in the movement.

"It was!" he reiterated, using his tongue with difficulty but with persistence. "It was the woman talking to you on the steps last night. The woman who said she was Mrs. Carson. And if she is Mrs. Carson, our Mrs. Carson is not married. She may marry somebody else if she likes."

No particle of color was left in Nadine's face. She turned, with a long look at the archdeacon — a look

that for one mad moment caught at the hope of a great release.

The judge roused the archdeacon further.

"She was here with him," said the archdeacon, with dazed eyes on the judge. "She called him Collie, like a dog, and he snarled like a dog."

"Ah!" The sound came on a long-drawn note from Nadine.

"Like a dog — and he had my trousers on!"

"My husband!" said Nadine.

"He is not your husband," said the archdeacon.

"The woman said he was not."

Judge Wallace slipped his hand under the archdeacon's head.

"Let us see if we can get him into a chair, Cressler."

He lifted the archdeacon's head a little. "Now, Archdeacon, head up! Try! Can you sit up?"

The two men lifted him into a low chair.

"The police, do you think, Judge?" said Cressler Wallace.

"I think not, Cress. A doctor, perhaps, a little later. In a moment the archdeacon will be able to tell us about it a little more rationally. Steady, now, Archdeacon. Put your head so. Now, rest a moment."

"Somebody has evidently attacked and choked

him," said Cressler Wallace. "He speaks of a man with a woman; a woman talking with you last night — on the steps. Was there such a woman?"

The judge gave Nadine a swift glance.

"Yes," he answered. "And I recall the woman said last night that she had to go back into the country where she was working. Did you take on a new girl, Cressler?"

"We took on several for the wedding, but doubtless they had recommendations. Anita can tell you."

"She called the man with her Collie," said the archdeacon. "Like a dog, and he snarled like a dog. He had on my trousers."

Cressler Wallace went out on the veranda to examine it. The judge spoke to the archdeacon.

"Can you remember anything else about the man?"

"He had the strength of an ox, and his teeth had blood on them. His hand was bleeding."

"It was Colin!" said Nadine faintly.

"How could he get in here?" asked Judge Wallace.

Cressler Wallace returned. "There are footprints in the earth on the side of the hill. Somebody has jumped from the veranda to the hill. You see, they are nearly level there, and the trees grow close to the edge. It could be done, without attracting attention, on this side of the house. What did they tell you at the sanatorium about Mr. Carson?"

"The doctors there," said the judge, "think that somebody has been getting letters to Mr. Carson through the help of one of the attendants, and that he received help from the outside. For when he left he had only the linen uniform that they use for such cases, and with the care with which they have scoured the country, he could not have gone far without being seen. It looks as if the girl was waiting for him here. This is the last place where the searchers would have looked—a household on intimate terms with his wife, and a house full of wedding guests."

"The cleverest of all places to hide him," said Cressler Wallace. "With the excellent chance of obtaining less conspicuous clothes for him, and of escape during the wedding breakfast. How long a start have they had?"

"About an hour, surely," said the judge.

"What will you do?" asked Cressler Wallace.

"I will telephone the sanatorium at once," said the judge.

"This girl—" Nadine's voice came coldly—"is she clever enough to plan a thing like this?"

"Its cleverness may have been mere chance, Mrs. Carson," said the judge.

Nadine turned suddenly on the archdeacon.

"Is this the girl you told me of last night?"

"Yes."

"You said last night that you had seen her talking with Harding, my discharged manager — when was it, last week?"

"I can not remember how long ago, but I saw her." Nadine's eyes met the judge's.

"I will go with you to the telephone," she said.

Out in the hall, they faced each other. The woman's face had whitened until it seemed as if agony itself looked forth from it. She shut her eyes a moment with a long breath. Then she spoke.

"This woman — is there any hope — any small hope — of this story being true?"

"Any hope! Do you want to believe it? Do you call it hope to find yourself no wife? Do you wish to sacrifice yourself — your position — this money?"

"Yes!" she said, and in her voice lay stirring depths.

"Yes, yes, yes!"

The judge was silent, searching his memory, trying to look at the other side of this matter he had always looked on in but one way.

"There is a chance," he said at length.

"Ah!" The sound was almost a moan. "Why have you kept such a chance from me for a day, or an hour?"

"It is incredible that you should want it. I do not

know if the matter can be so twisted. It was settled long ago. It is — only the faintest of chances, and perhaps after you have thought it over, after you are quieter, you will not wish for such an outcome — of — so — ordinary an affair.”

“Do you think I have not searched for escape all these years, longed for it, dreamed of it? Wish for such an outcome! Every fiber, every brain cell, cries out for it. Not to be this man’s wife — to leave his frightful money, and all these things that tie me to this barren life I lead — to put it all behind me — to go out alone — belonging to myself — owing him nothing — rid of the burden and the responsibility of this power thrust into my hands with so much misery. Oh, you must help me to do it! You must help me to my chance of life! Try to see it with my eyes!”

“I would, indeed, be no man if I did not try to think every day of some way to help you, who have given me back my strength, and my health, and my chance to reënter my own world. If this is the thing you want — if you come to me, not to-morrow, or the next day, but after a week or two of measuring all that it will mean to you of loss — loss not only of money, but of position — then if you still want it I will do my best for you. And now I must do two things: I must find these two — the girl and the man; and

I must ask the archdeacon to keep quiet about the girl."

As he spoke, Cressler Wallace opened the door to help the archdeacon into his own room.

"I suppose," said the archdeacon, on a note of explanation, "that mine were the only ones in the house that would fit him. He is so tall."

Down the hallway came Mrs. Morris with Mrs. Cressler Wallace. Mrs. Morris looked at the archdeacon on Cressler Wallace's arm, and her voice rose in inquiry.

"Are you all right again, Archdeacon? Is he all right, Mr. Wallace?"

"He will be soon, Mrs. Morris."

"But how, Archdeacon, did you get into Mrs. Carson's room?"

Mrs. Morris' voice held anxiety, demanded an answer.

The archdeacon sent his still dazed eyes from Mrs. Morris, fair and promising, to Mrs. Carson, white and shrinking. He looked down at the marks of his fight on his hands and at his torn clothes; he thought of the man who snarled like a dog, and of the woman with the scar on her face, and of what she signified; and then boldly, for all his haziness, the archdeacon cast out the devil of indecision that had dwelt with him so long. Valiantly he made his choice — the

stranger woman and the insurgent ranks; the chance, and not the security.

"I went for the man who had my trousers," said the archdeacon. "And if Mrs. Carson does not mind, why should you?"

CHAPTER XIII

“Where lies the gain
Of Knowledge? Would it ease you of your pain?”

CARLETON THORNE took his wife to the Catskills for a fortnight, after which he had to return to New York for two weeks, and then he and Amy were to sail for several months abroad.

Judge Wallace met them at dinner on their return from the Catskills, finding a radiant and charming bride.

“Where is Nadine, father?” said Amy. “I thought you were to bring her with you to-night.”

The judge hesitated a moment, then he took a letter from his pocket.

“Mrs. Carson is in Boston. I think I might as well tell you both.” He gave them a brief outline of the attack on the archdeacon and the circumstances surrounding it that had occurred after their departure from Cressler.

“Mrs. Carson and I,” he continued, “came back to town together almost in silence. For several days I saw nothing of her. My investigations of Harding’s

management of the estate were concluded, but I could not even interest her in them. You see, already she had begun to try to separate herself from these things. The matters at issue between Harding and myself did not get into court, and all that I could do for Mrs. Carson about the disappearance of her husband could be done without her assistance, so I did not intrude on her."

"Has anything been heard of Mr. Carson?" said Amy.

"Nothing so far, though the best detectives of the country are hunting for him."

"It seems impossible," said Carleton Thorne, "that a paranceac as conspicuous as he is, could remain hidden so long. He would certainly not have wit enough to keep from betraying himself."

"He is not alone," said the judge. "The woman who is with him is probably furnishing the brains of the episode. I do not know who is furnishing the money, but it will probably soon give out, and then we shall hear from them. We should have heard sooner if the news of his escape had been made public; but under the circumstances, it is quite naturally a thing we want to keep quiet if we can. We also think some rather clever man is mixed up in it. We are having Harding watched. Meantime, Mrs. Carson sent me this note to-day.

"I have asked you to permit this woman, who says she is Colin Carson's wife, to prove that she is, and you have said that you will not act on my hasty impulse. I am going away by myself to think it over with the utmost care, away from my friends, or the evidences of the luxury I shall have to give up. I shall live as I should have to live if I were not the dispenser of Colin Carson's money. I shall go to some inexpensive Boston hotel, and in a day or two I will send you my address if you will see that I am not intruded on.

"At the end of the week I shall expect you to believe that my impulse is neither hasty nor unconsidered."

"If it were I," said Amy, "I should prefer release from Colin Carson at any price."

"You have not lived as she has, Amy," said the doctor. "It is not simply a life of ease she gives up, but one of power and influence that she has created by the addition of her own intelligence and ability to these millions she has had at her disposal. She would at one stroke become a declassed woman. She would drop from inconceivable luxury to a penury more unendurable because of the things that by this time are food and drink to her. She would encounter public scandal, and if she escaped insult she would do well."

"And what would she gain?" said Judge Wallace. "With Carson back in his sanatorium, she is free to do

as she chooses. She has opportunities equaled by only three or four women in the world."

"Yes." Amy Thorne's voice was impatient. "The granaries are full to bursting. I admit it. But it is possible that she has graver needs than these. To you it seems she has but to choose. Suppose she chooses the one thing this indissoluble marriage to a maniac denies her."

The two men looked at each other. Then Carleton Thorne spoke with hesitation.

"It would be a foolish thing to give up all of this — for — for — some man. Amy, what makes you suppose there is such a man?"

"Nadine's wish to give it up."

"It is incredible," said Carleton Thorne.

Yet his protest was merely a concession to a thing he did not wish to believe because he was Wrexford Thorne's brother. Even as he made it, he realized that this was a possibility he had long faced.

The first time he had seen these two together he had seen also their perfect adaptation to each other. He knew of no woman whose mind and whose culture so mated his brother's. He also knew that the tragedy of their growth into love of each other, across the bar of the woman's bondage to a marriage that was no marriage would, if it came to pass, take no

compromised expression. It would mean marriage or renunciation.

His brother was of all men in the world the one man to whom the taking of a wife under the circumstances surrounding Mrs. Carson would mean a sacrifice of career. He was the rector of the most conspicuous parish in the greatest city of America. He was watched and gossiped about ; advised and followed. Nothing but a gift for discretion had saved him from a thousand difficulties.

Doctor Thorne turned to his father-in-law.

"Will you tell me," he said, "what there is in Mrs. Carson's hope of escape from her marriage?"

"I will see if I can make it clear to you," said the judge.

"About two years before Carson married, and four years before he was committed to a sanatorium, he became entangled with a woman quite beyond her class in intelligence. He found it extremely difficult to get away from her after he had tired of her. She even went so far as to engage a lawyer and claim a wedding ceremony of some sort. Harding was at that time Carson's lawyer, and he finally settled with the woman for a large sum. The amount is on the estate books.

"The ceremony was so obviously a fake as not to engage either lawyer's attention. It was merely an or-

dinary case of blackmail timed well — for Carson was about to marry and unwilling to risk notoriety.

“ You recall that Harding was trustee of the estate a few years longer, and for one year after Carson was committed to his sanatorium. Then Mrs. Carson, convinced that Harding was using both his position and the money that passed through his hands for his own enrichment, had him removed. After an interval I took Harding’s place.

“ In my investigations of my predecessor’s business methods, I gained the impression that it was he who had brought this woman to Carson’s attention, he who had persuaded Carson to accede to her demands for money, and that he probably shared in her gains. It was also Harding who assisted Mrs. Carson in having her husband declared insane. I think he had no notion of Mrs. Carson’s ability. During the two years she had lived with Carson, she was in constant terror of him, and there was nothing then to indicate the quality of her intelligence. I believe Harding supposed that he had only to be rid of Carson, and his own management of this colossal estate would not be questioned.

“ Very suddenly, in the midst of Harding’s most ambitious planning, Mrs. Carson, who had been steadily watching him, put an end to all his plans. You could not expect him to forgive it. And now

this woman reappears, and is seen talking with Harding. A few days after, Carson escapes from his sanatorium under circumstances that show help from the outside, and both Carson and the woman are seen together. You can call this accidental, yet to me it points quite unmistakably to Harding. A paranœac and a woman like this, with a long scar on her face, are too conspicuous to disappear without competent help."

"And the woman?" said Carleton Thorne.

"As for the woman's claim," the judge answered, "I would have said there is nothing in it but for Mrs. Carson's singular request that I let her prove it true. This requires me to look into the matter from another standpoint."

"What will you do, father?" said Amy.

"I will wait for Harding to move. He will do one of two things: If he himself believes this girl is married to Carson he will immediately bring suit — probably quietly — and the thing will be tried before a referee. If he does not believe she is married, he will come to my office and threaten to bring suit, in which case it will probably turn out to be an ordinary case of blackmail."

"And Nadine," said Amy Thorne, "waiting in Boston?"

"I shall telephone her this as soon as she sends her address."

Amy Thorne leaned toward her husband.

"Carl," she said, "where is Wrexford? He is not in town."

The doctor stared at his wife.

"Why, Rex is —" He considered. "Rex is in Boston. He went there several days ago to confer with the bishop of Northern Massachusetts."

"Rex is in Boston," said Amy Thorne.

The three looked at one another.

CHAPTER XIV

"Who knows but when that red sun goes its way,
It may not light another day like this."

NADINE CARSON turned the chair, where she sat at the end of the parlor car, toward the window, and stared blindly out at the flying fields. The very pillars of her life were crumbling about her; its foundations shaken by this news, now two weeks old, that somewhere in the world there was a woman who asserted that she was Colin Carson's wife and that Nadine was not.

We are so finely formed for the adapting of ourselves to what can not be altered that we live day after day with those things that deny us, and threaten us, and stunt us, adapting our daily living to them with no real comprehension of the powers within us that sleep beneath our endurance. Then the hour comes when character forces of which we have not dreamed rise within us, and bend and break our little conventions and shatter our careful habits, and the way before us is swept bare of its landmarks. We do things we had not thought possible, we move through strange ways, astonished at ourselves, knowing ourselves in-

eradicably changed, even though our lives find the same spaces of time in the same world, among the same people.

Strange thoughts Nadine had not dreamed could come to her rang in her brain; whispers of the untamable spirit swayed her with promise of the glory of the earth; love that lives not on the body and its sacrifice, but on the spirit and its growth, spoke to her. How had she, who had gathered into her warped life a hundred little loves, born of the hour's weariness or the moment's mood, found this love, deep with faith in its own immortality, quiet with that patience that knows eternity lies beyond?


It had come to her slowly at first with that friendship that is love's servant; in the hand stretched out to turn her from a path ending in waste places; in the look of grave gray eyes summoning her to usefulness; in service, and understanding, and work together among those brought into her life who needed help.

It was Wrexford Thorne who had shown her that her gift of that intelligence swift to perceive a situation, was the gift that should lie behind all help of others. The words were few between them, save as they met to speak of others' needs. Sometimes a book or a picture filled an odd moment. There was none of those occasions where love thrives on events;

no propinquity, no casual meetings, no little dinners, no summer afternoons idled together; none of the things Nadine had supposed helped to build love. It had been this that had kept her from calling this friendship love during the period of its growth; even when she realized that only in this man's presence there came to her that strange rest that is our rarest promise of the peace that passeth understanding — she had not known. She had only said to herself, how a woman could love such a man!

But none may look on the great love not knowing it, and the hour of Nadine's vision came as inevitably as the love itself. She had faced it believing that there was no hope for her; and now freedom was perhaps at hand. She looked at it, wondering if it would mean anything to the man she loved. To be loved by one we love is so incredible that it is no wonder we can scarcely believe it. Fear touched her heart, and whitened her face, and looked out of her eyes.

In the station at Boston, Nadine had a few minutes of indecision. It had been a long time since she had carried her own bag or traveled without competent attendants. Not since her marriage had she gone to a hotel that had not elaborately arranged to receive her with the best it had to offer. It had been many years since she had entered a street-car. Yet the



bag she had brought from the wedding was not a very heavy burden, and the street-car carried her within two squares of the hotel she chose on Copley Square, away from chance tourists who might recognize her.

She walked the two squares slowly, tasting that part of her possible freedom that meant the giving up of Colin Carson's money. At a triangle made by intersecting streets and filled by a massive, square-towered church, she turned to her hotel, passing that side of the triangle that was at the back of the church and on which faced its offices and its lecture-rooms. The street door bore a sign:

"Church open. Come in. Rest and pray."

Because of the man she loved all churches had significance for Nadine, and she looked at this open door thoughtfully, wondering if in this busy city there were those who paused to enter a church to pray. What if one could rest and pray? Would it mean that steadying of moral purpose, that finding of spiritual resolution it promised?

She looked back at the church as she crossed the street to her hotel, and, after she had registered, she asked what church it was.

"Trinity Church," answered the clerk, looking at the "Mrs. Colin Carson, New York," inscribed on his

book. "It is the church Phillips Brooks preached in. What kind of a room will you have, Mrs. Carson?"

Nadine looked at him a moment, recognizing his doubt of a woman who came alone carrying her own bag and who registered with a name familiar to the country for its wealth.

"An outside room, with bath, and reasonable in price," said Nadine. "I will look at it first."

As the bell-boy put down her bag and drew up the shades of her room, Nadine crossed to the window and looked down on the square church towers around which hundreds of pigeons were wheeling. The man for whom this church had been built was no religious weakling, but one who fought and — she hesitated and added — prayed.

Left alone in the bare hotel room, Nadine had her first realization of what a new life beyond the influence of the things she had built on the wealth she had at her disposal would mean. Restlessness overtook her, and loneliness and doubt.

She had not removed her hat. She left her room, and presently she stood before the church door, with its sign of invitation. It yielded to her touch, and she found herself in a hallway out of which opened many smaller rooms at the back of the church. Ahead of her an open door gave a vista of the church at the side of the chancel.

There was no other sound than the low murmur of a man's voice in one of the rooms she passed, and the light even in the hall came remotely from dim stained windows. The church itself, as she entered, was gloomy and deserted.

She stood a moment hesitating, looking about her. Then she moved forward beyond the chancel, and sank down in one of the cushioned pews. Rest was far from her, and prayer was denied her. For in the dim silence realization again overtook her, and with it, fear.

This freedom she craved! What was it if it meant only silence and solitude? Unless it brought her nearer to the love that had begun to form her life, it was, indeed, a valueless thing. And suddenly she saw how valueless were all things in her life that brought her no nearer to this "one thing".

The fear that had been dogging her thoughts expressed itself. Suppose she went forth from these years of unhappiness toward the man she loved! She would come to him through paths of scandal, pointed at by every newspaper, her name on every tongue. And this to a rector dependent on the women of his congregation for recognition, a social servant to whom convention was a necessity of his influence, would be disaster itself. She had thought it tragic enough that she could not come to him a girl, but that she must

come a woman marked by the odium of a bigamous marriage was unthinkable.

She arose and moved to and fro in one of the dim aisles of the deserted church.

Out in the hall the two men who had been talking in a little study off the vestry finished their plans and rose to go. At the street door the taller man paused.

"I will go back a little into the church, Bishop, and think about what you have said."

He moved slowly down the hallway,—grave gray eyes on the floor, uncovered head bent. He entered the church, and then paused. A woman walked to and fro, as though pursued by bitter thoughts, her slender strength beating against some inner obstacle to which she would not yield.

He considered how he might withdraw without disturbing her, and then, as he waited, something in the grace of her movement clutched suddenly at the man's heart, and he leaned forward eagerly.

Even as he did so, Nadine checked her restless pacing before the darkened altar, staring at it with uplifted white face.

"Was it not God's mercy-seat in other days?" he heard her whisper. "Ah, God, if you still live, how do we poor things of earth find you, save through these things of the spirit—save through love? Give me love—give me this man's love, this man who is your

priest — that I, too, may find you and believe that you are God.”

Reluctantly and unbelievably, she cast her first real prayer on the darkened altar, measuring Godhead with her own insufficiency. She waited a moment, and then turned away. What could rest or prayer mean to her? And as she turned, from the dim spaces of the church as if in answer to her cry, came Wrexford Thorne; came with his quiet eyes, and his close-shut mouth, and that look in his face that was her gift to him.

On the hands held out to her she put her own, and they looked at each other in silence. Between them lay no need of words. About them lingered soft sacred things of other worlds — winged whispers of the spirit, promising the eternal years to that which can not die.

He stopped to look at her a moment as they reached the street door. The blue eyes were dark-circled with fatigue, the color had fled from her face, yet over it was a look of springtime.

“There is an elfin look about you, somehow. Perhaps you have come up from Elfheim. Are you by any chance the dusk-elf gathering sunset colors to take back with you?”

“No;” and she looked out across the strange sky-

line of buildings. "No, I am Delling, the elf of the dawn — not of the dusk. But even a dawn-elf can not know how you happen to be here."

He hesitated.

"It is a secret," he said.

"I will keep it inviolate."

"Well, then — they are thinking of making me — a bishop."

She stared at him, and then slowly a little fringe of color rose into her cheeks. A bishop had no congregation that a wife must placate. A bishop's wife need not be gifted in parish work — she could be as other wives; helping her husband's work as she helped him; not hindering it as she failed to please.

She knew of one bishop whose wife had come to him rich in social power, and so enriched his opportunities for good. And there had been another, who had married with only a dower of measureless love, and his life was its expression.

"I congratulate you," she said softly.

"And you?" he asked. "Does some coaching party lurk around the corner waiting for you to come? How does it happen that you should be in the church where I had to be?"

"Nobody waits for me, and I am alone. I am registered at the hotel across the street because it is quiet and inexpensive."

He came a step nearer to her.

"What are you telling me?" he asked.

"I am telling you that I have stepped out of all this wealth, that I have no place to go, that I am as any girl who wanders about hunting for some way of making a living."

He put his hand on her arm and drew her back into the corridor to a bench beside the door.

"What are you doing?" he asked deliberately.

"If it could be proved," she said, and never had her low voice held more sweetness, "that I was not Colin Carson's wife; if it could be proved that I have never been his wife —"

Some deep inward flame touched his face. His hand tightened on her arm.

Presently she spoke, in low tones of reaction, of the woman whose claim preceded hers needing to be proved; of the week of denial she planned for herself here where she would not be known.

As she spoke he released her arm, and his face grew cold, measuring her words.

She looked at him in a moment's silence, and then voiced her fear.

"If this thing can be proved," she said, "there will be scarcely a place where I can hide from the scandal of it."

"What is this scandal that you fear? Nothing that

can really hurt you. You have been injured. You have been tricked and cheated in marriage. This is no fault of yours but of those who did it. It does not touch you as a woman. If you go free, there are things I shall wish to say to you that I can not say now."

"And if I do not?"

He made her no answer.

"Listen," she said. "I am to-night just a girl you know, and have come on suddenly in a lonely city where you have nothing to do. Think how long it has been since I with my heavy millions, and you with your church, have played a real game for real pleasure. I am poor to-night, and you are but a college student, your plans not yet complete, your career not yet arranged. I will go back to my hotel, and presently you will come for me, and we will dine, not as I have dined all these stupid years, but in some quiet, little, inexpensive place befitting the purse of a student. And then shall we not go to some play and sit in the balcony, or hear some music? We have never dined alone together in our lives. We have never gone to the theater together. We have done none of the things that other young men and women do to brighten their companionship."

Her voice faltered, and then went bravely on. "Perhaps when this day is gone we may never be able to do these things again. Will you?"

"Yes. I will come for you in an hour, and in the meantime I will have found what music there is to be heard, and if there is a play so late in the season. And perhaps to-morrow, like any girl tourist, you will go with me to Harvard. We can even walk through the Common while we talk over the history that began there; and there is Bunker Hill — did you know that it is near Boston?"

"I have heard it was," said Nadine with a little catch of laughter in her voice. "But I do not really believe it."

"Ah, you are in Boston now, where you can see and believe."

He crossed the street with her to the door of her hotel.

"In an hour," he said.

High up in her room at the hotel Nadine stood for a moment looking across at the Trinity towers. Then she bathed and dressed slowly, brushing the dust from her blue crêpe frock with unaccustomed fingers, and looking at it a bit doubtfully. She would have liked to look her best. She studied her whitened face a moment, and her fingers reached out for the rouge that would brighten it and give it youth; then she shook her head.

She coiled her bronze hair slowly. For six years the deftest of maids had dressed her. She smiled

softly at her bungling; it was time she found the use of her own fingers again. She lingered over the details of her toilet in the pleasure of dressing for him. She slipped the perfumed crêpe, with its silken embroideries, over her head, and saw her eyes grow bluer as she fastened the blue about her uncollared throat. Then came the knock that terminated her happy hour, and on the tray the boy held out lay Wrexford Thorne's card.

Before she went down-stairs, Nadine stopped at the window again to look out at the gray towers and wait for a calmer heart-beat; and, as she waited, she knew that all the pain of her life was well worth living through if it brought her to this moment.

As Wrexford Thorne came toward her down the length of the hotel drawing-room, with that ease of movement that in a less masculine man would have been grace, the color flooded her face, and she put her hand in his with a shyness that bore its own message to the man.

"It is the dawn-elf." He smiled at her. "You look young as the dawn, and as rosy. I think I shall take you off where nobody else can see all this blushing and unblushing. I shall buy you a veil."

"You will have to if you wish me to wear one, for I've only what I have on with me."

"Then we shall go shopping to-morrow."

"To-night," she nodded. "I must have a tooth-brush."

He opened the door for her, and they passed into the darkened street. .

"I think I have never bought a tooth-brush for a lady," he said; "but I like the idea. It shall be done!"

He looked up at an automobile that had passed them as they came out of the door of the hotel together, been checked suddenly, and turning, had come back slowly.

In the tonneau of the automobile, Thorne saw dimly that a man was leaning forward scanning Nadine eagerly behind shining eye-glasses. He had a sudden hope that she would not see and his hand tightened on her arm. The man's eyes passed from Nadine, utterly unconscious of anything else in the world save the hand on her arm, to Wrexford Thorne. Then Thorne heard the man give an order to his chauffeur.

"Turn around, Johnthon. I've theen quite enough."

There was the faintest possible lisp in the peremptory voice.

Wrexford Thorne sent an angry glance after the turning car. If by any chance he met Higginham alone, he felt there were things he would enjoy saying to him,

"Where are you taking me, Wrexford Thorne?" said Nadine softly.

"To dinner with me. To a little Japanese place hung with wistaria. There will be no people there this late, and you will have queer things to eat. You can also look at me quite unblushingly, if you choose."

"Are you sure I can — if I choose?"

He looked down on her. Back of the clear whiteness of his face a glow burned somewhere.

"No — no — who am I to be sure of so wonderful a thing?"

She slackened her pace, catching her breath.

"Oh, wait, I have never dreamed such happiness was in the world. Let me linger over it."

He passed over the underlying tragedy that made her linger over each separate moment.

"You can not guess," he said, "what I have been saying to myself all this hour I have been away from you. I said it to the Japanese man. I said it to the man of whom I bought tickets — tickets at the only theater open so late in the year — a stock company where they will play a real wonder of plays, *Secret Service*."

"What have you been saying?" she said, catching at the cloak of this gay raillery and throwing it about her.

"Guess!" he commanded, as they passed up the

steps of a brownstone house, whose windows glowed with lavender light and whose walls were trellised with wistaria.

"How can I guess?" said Nadine.

They sat at a little table in a corner bower of lavender paper flowers, looking at each other over the lavender shades, and with no more thought of what they ate than if it had never been through Japanese fingers.

"I said—" He laughed softly. "I said: 'Nadine, Nadine, Nadine.' You look as if you did not believe me. Yet does it not sound as if I had said it very often? The Jap man stared at me, and the ticket man smiled at me, but all down the street I kept on saying it. It can be said so many different ways! Ah, there you go, one deep, beautiful, glorious blush of wild rose all over your face! Even your eyes blush, only they blush bluer and bluer. It is well you are in the corner with my shoulders blocking all vision of you. Do you know that your eyes are incredibly blue?"

"No," she laughed.

"Yes. And the lashes are all tangled up now because you are ashamed to look up at me with your face covered with that outrageous blush."

"I am not!" she protested.

"Then look at me, Nadine." He laughed at her with a boy's laugh. "Try, try, Nadine. Look first

at this little black bow on my collar that is not clerical. Yes, that untangles them a little. How long and dark they are for such blue eyes! Now up to the chin — so. I thought I should have to unknot the lashes, but they come apart easily, after all. Now take a long, long breath, and look me straight in the eyes.”

They looked at each other in silence, and over the woman stole, second by second, the swift tide born of soul and bred by spirit that is the body's tribute to love.

New to her for all her wanderings, strange with a depth no mere pleasure could sound, vital with creative impulse, passion trembled in her blood, caught her breath, swept from her eyes to his, with its message of perfect mating.

When the soft-footed Japanese had brought finger-bowls they rose.

“The records of Salem days were mostly destroyed,” he said, as they moved down the steps. “I suppose nobody will ever know how many women were burned as witches. Be glad, Nadine, that you did not live here in those days. The years are not so many since you would have come to such an end.”

“Oh, Serene Highness,” she said, “the world still persecutes women for witchery.”

“It has to save its self-respect. We take a cab to the theater. There will be shots fired, and breathless

moments, and fine climaxes; and, when it is over, we shall walk back to your hotel through the gardens. And to-morrow you will never guess how I am coming for you! In no limousine; but in a runabout with a real horse. Have you ever driven a real horse with a real man in your life, Nadine?"

"No Eccellenza, I have not."

"You shall drive with me to-morrow. Out to Harvard to see the glass flowers."

"Oh, oh! What a thing to go to Harvard for! I do not believe there are any."

"You shall see. You think you know Boston because you have run up in a private car to some ball or débutante tea. You shall see the depths of your ignorance of the cradle of your country's freedom. You shall go with me to the North Tower, and to George Washington's church, and I will ask you questions that will betray your lack of education."

And suddenly Wrexford Thorne thought of her library, with its hundreds of used books, of her unparaded breadth of culture, of what she knew of music and color and events.

"All this in a runabout in one day?" said Nadine. He smiled at her.

"A whole lifetime can go into one day, Nadine."

CHAPTER XV

“O, voices breaking still,
For all the watchful will,
Into a kinder kindness than seemed due
From you to me, and me to you!
And that hot-eyed, close-throated, blind regret
Of woman and man balked and debarred the blue!”

JUDGE WALLACE took off the receiver to answer Mrs. Carson's long-distance call. She received his information that there had been no news of Mr. Carson, in spite of the most arduous detective work, with no comment.

“And the woman?” she asked.

“Nothing of her. But Harding returned to town to-day. I think you had better come back, Mrs. Carson. If the woman has a case, you will hear of it soon. If it is blackmail, Harding will begin it at once.”

“I will return to-day. Will you come to my house at four?”

“I had better meet your train. It is not safe for you to go about alone with Mr. Carson unaccounted for.”

"Hayes will meet me with the limousine. I will see you at four. Good-by."

The judge hung up the receiver, and then called his daughter on the telephone.

"Amy," he said, "have you heard if Wrexford Thorne is home?"

"He returned from Boston three days ago, father. Neither Carleton nor I have seen him, though he telephoned Carl to ask about Mr. Carson."

"Mrs. Carson will be home this afternoon. Perhaps you will want to see her."

The judge's secretary opened his office door, and paused as he heard the telephoning. The judge hung up the receiver.

"What is it?" he asked.

The secretary closed the door and came in.

"Mr. Harding, sir, is in the other room. Will you receive him?"

The two men looked at each other with swift glances of significance.

"It is all over, then, but the finish," said the judge. "Ask Mr. Harding to wait. Then bring me the memoranda from the bank. Give me about fifteen minutes, and then show him in. I will not answer the telephone or be disturbed while he is here."

As Harding entered the office, the judge looked up from a packet of papers he was examining.

"Will you sit down, Mr. Harding?" he said absently. "Just a moment, please."

He finished the papers thoughtfully, put a rubber band around them, and holding them in his hand, looked across his desk at Harding in absolute silence.

Harding waited a moment for the judge to speak, and, finding it useless, he said:

"I have come to talk over with you my client's claim of marriage with Mr. Carson. It has taken me some little time to prepare my case, and I have had to go on to Chicago to hunt up the records and secure the witnesses; but I am about ready now, and we propose to bring the matter to a speedy conclusion."

He paused to give the judge a chance to answer, but the pause remained unfilled. The judge looked out of the window, apparently waiting for Harding to continue.

Harding considered him a moment.

"You know," he said, "that we can prove our claim."

"There is, of course, the little formality of the proof," suggested the judge indifferently.

"We can do it."

"You had one chance to do it. It did not come to much."

"It came to sixty thousand dollars, and that sounded better to my client at that time than Carson's

threats if she should succeed in proving her marriage to him. He was not in an asylum then, and he declared that if she proved marriage he would divorce her, and she would not have a penny of his money; whereas, the other way she would be made moderately independent.

"But now he is insane. He can not divorce, and the thing looks better to my client. We propose to establish her claims and take over the management of the estate."

"Very well," said the judge.

Harding looked at him in astonishment.

"Is that all you have to say?" he asked.

"Very nearly. I will add, if you like, that Mrs. Carson — a little tired of being the wife of a paranoiac, — will be very glad to have you prove your claims and release her from a position which, as you say, is not possible of alleviation by divorce."

The judge again looked out of the window. The other man stared at him. His mask of a face hid whatever astonishment he felt, but he moistened his lips before he spoke again.

"She wishes to give up her share of a thirty-million-dollar estate to be released from Colin Carson?"

"Apparently."

Harding sat back in his chair trying to comprehend so stupendous a sentiment in a woman he had cause

to know was well-balanced and intelligent. Failing utterly, he concluded it to be a clever trick of her lawyer.

He rose.

"This is all you have to say about the matter?" he asked.

"I had nothing to say of any sort. I believe it was you who wished to talk."

"You know, of course, that even if we should not win, we can make you very considerable trouble. This woman knows a good deal about Carson — she was with him several years. There will be a few thousand people who will never believe Mrs. Carson has a right either to her name or her money. She will be talked about all over the country. Do you mean to say that this is of no account to her?"

"If it is inevitable, why should she worry about it?"

Harding hesitated.

"There might be some compromise effected," he said at length.

The judge made no answer.

"For a sufficient sum — nothing, of course, like the miserable sixty thousand with which she was first bought off — my client might consider keeping quiet. She does not want position — she wants support."

"Not even clever at your blackmailing, Harding,"

said Judge Wallace. "I think I answered you when I said Mrs. Carson would be glad to assist you in proving your client's claim."

Harding looked down at the floor a moment.

"I do not believe you," he said finally. "I know Mrs. Carson pretty well. It has not been so long since I was trustee of the estate, and saw her often. There are all kinds of ugly stories about her that I can stir up. There isn't a reporter in New York that could keep away from some of the things I can tell. I think I'll see her first about a few of these stories. If she wants to forfeit millions to get rid of Carson as husband, there's some man she'll not be anxious to have hear all I can tell. And she'll be anxious to the tune of a few hundred thousand, I think. Good day, Mr. Wallace."

"Just a moment," said the judge.

"Ah!" said Harding.

But the judge's voice was still indifferent, though his words came clearly and with a certain crispness.

"It has probably not occurred to you that, following your removal from the management of the Carson estate, I was made counsel for the Fulton Bank, where the Carson funds have been on deposit for twenty years."

"It does not concern me," said Harding.

"A little. I am also a director of the bank and a

member of its executive committee. I took over the management of the Carson funds after a pretty thorough examination into what you had done — an examination that was facilitated by these offices I hold.”

The judge took the rubber band off his papers and unfolded one.

“During the last year of your incumbency, there is a little matter of eighty thousand dollars used by you. It was kept out of the bank three months, and then restored with five per cent. for the use of the money. Now, Mr. Harding, I have no real wish to quibble over this sum, nor yet over the fifty-six thousand dollars borrowed a little later with no security, and handled in much the same way. Both sums were returned to the estate, and the interest was fair.

“Until I began to surmise that you were behind this woman who was threatening to dispossess Mrs. Carson, I did not concern myself very much about the money. But when I found you were the one we would have to fight, I investigated it. I have a little record here of eighty thousand dollars’ worth of steel stock bought on margin when it touched bottom and sold high. I have also a record of a fifty-six-thousand-dollar purchase of yours of Wabash Preferred, bought at nineteen and held for two months during its swift upward run; finally sold at forty-three.

"You are, of course, familiar with the fact that the penalty for this kind of thing is between six and fourteen years in the penitentiary. I have no wish to prosecute you unless you become troublesome to Mrs. Carson. If you do, it will have to be done from behind a few bars, I think.

"Now, as to this woman: I conclude that she is with Carson, and that you know where they are. I am anxious to return Carson to the sanatorium. I shall expect you to produce him within the next fortnight. If you do, though I think the sixty thousand dollars the girl received from the Carson estate a pretty big haul, nevertheless, if she proves to me that she is destitute, I will ask Mrs. Carson if she can see her way to a small annuity for her — to be withdrawn if she annoys any of us. And that is all, Harding."

The judge folded his paper and put it within the rubber band. Harding stood with his eyes on the floor. His face whitened slowly. He had planned long and executed carefully a hazardous enterprise with the uncertain assistance of a paranœac and an emotional woman. He had taken pains for what he believed would be a large result. He had felt there was no limit to the money he might collect if he used even a moderate discretion. He faced his failure with bitter anger.

"I know nothing at all of the whereabouts of Colin

Carson. If I did, I should be the first one to remand him to an asylum."

"And your client? She was last seen with Carson at Cressler, on Long Island."

"Well, they are not together now. You can set your detectives to work if you do not believe it."

The judge rose.

"Good afternoon, Harding. As I said, I shall expect information from you as to Carson's whereabouts during the next fortnight. You can have no object in keeping him at large if you decide not to press your blackmail."

"I know nothing about him," said Harding, and the door closed behind him.

The judge looked at his watch and rang for his secretary.

Three hours later Rawlins opened Mrs. Carson's door for Judge Wallace.

"In the library, sir," he said, with the deference that accorded a privilege. "Mrs. Carson has just arrived. She will be down-stairs in a few minutes. The Reverend Mr. Thorne is in the library, sir."

Wrexford Thorne stood with his back to the library door, looking at the painting of the girl and the man in their shell of a boat tossed by a sea haunted with dim forms; looking at the fear in the man's face and the blind ecstasy in the girl's. He turned as the judge

entered the room, as if he had expected another, and the judge looked at him with concern. His face had the tension of sleeplessness, the eyes gray-rimmed, the close-shut lips dull, the skin colorless.

They had no time even to greet each other. Rawlins opened the door again, and Mrs. Carson entered. The judge came forward with outstretched hand. Wrexford Thorne stood where he was, the tension in his eyes deepening to strain.

Some subtle force had been at work within Nadine with proof of what love unbound and victorious can do. Every softened curve of her face was underlined, every mark of vivid personality was accented.

"I am glad you are both here," she said. "I want you, Judge, to explain to Mr. Thorne my chance of release."

The two men's eyes met. Instinctively the judge sought to palliate his news.

"Mrs. Carson, perhaps you might arrange to live in Florida the necessary length of time and divorce your husband."

She turned to him, instantly aware of some halting shadow across her dream.

"Divorce!" she said, and looked at Wrexford Thorne.

Of all the men she might have loved, he was the one man whose calling forbade him to marry a di-

forced woman. To do it he must give up his life's work. Not even for life spent with him would Nadine have endured such a sacrifice.

The judge plunged his news into the silence that followed Nadine's cry.

"Your marriage stands, Mrs. Carson. There is nothing in this girl's claim save an elaborate attempt at blackmail."

Nadine stared at him unbelievably. Her face slowly whitened. Its high courage dimmed.

"It can not be true," she whispered, at length. "Oh, surely it can not be true!"

"It is true. Harding is behind it, as I thought. He came to me to-day to try to get money. There is no chance of the girl proving her claim."

"You are sure — absolutely sure?" she said.

"I am sure," said the judge.

Her eyes passed over him and rested on Wrexford Thorne, watching her; and Judge Wallace, catching the look, left the room quietly, closing the door behind him.

The two behind the closed door made no movement toward each other. But as they looked across the gulf of this marriage that was no marriage, the white misery of the woman's face slowly deepened into something infinitely finer and stronger, that wonder of the world, love that knows its power and will not

use it for right's sake. It bound the man to her as no love fulfilled could have done.

Presently she spoke to him; a brief sentence: "If you go out of my life, I shall not be able to endure it."

"I shall not go out of your life even if I do not see you. We are still in the world, and this — this love is no thing of touch and speech."

It was his first word of love, and for a moment her very heart seemed to pause to listen.

"I have not your strength," she said.

"You have strength," he answered. "You are no weakling. You are tempered as steel is by flame and stress. This thing comes to you to prove that greatest strength of all, the strength that stands on sacrifice. Not even these days to come that are already threatening you with their barrenness shall take away your courage. We have not come into each other's lives for little fears or little gratifications, but for something that touches the very skirts of eternity.

"If you are denied marriage, by the same denial you are given the power of great wealth to lighten other pain. If you — are denied — motherhood, the world is full of tired children who need you and your great gift of understanding that comes of the heights and depths you have sounded."

"These things I have tried to do — because of you."

He made her no answer for some minutes. Then he said:

“Will you look back at your life a moment? There has been no time when you have been permitted to be weak. By every outside force you have been shaped to stand alone — able to achieve — as few women are able. And so I do not fear for your ability to serve without such help as I could give. Oh, Nadine, it is only standing alone that we can make the great things our own! Honor — not for some other’s sake, but for its own high purpose; service, not because it has been asked for, but for what it can do of good; love — love that is God’s gift of Himself; no tawdry thing of mere pleasure — love, the sacrifice, the sacrament.”

He crossed the room to her, taking her hands with close clasp.

“God keep you, Nadine.”

She heard the door close him out of the hours to come; a brief silence, and then the outer door swung into its lock.

And alone — as all of us must go to our Gethsemanes, no matter how near the friends who sleep within the garden of our trial — Nadine faced her sacrifice. Not this cup, we say; and the power is ours to refuse it, refusing for ever, if we do, Him who offers it.

Out of her hour Nadine came slowly, shaken and worn with the pangs of soul birth; came to a new Heaven and a new earth, a woman incomparably finer and sweeter, with new vision of her place in the lightening of the world's burden, a place that can only be won by those who face with courage the bearing of their own.

CHAPTER XVI

"If one go by the gate of Allah, the way is his, not yours."

CLAUDA, deft and careful, lifted the gray-blue gown from the chair where it had been flung, hung it carefully on a rack, and covered it with a silken bag marked "Embroidered Crêpe Robe—Paquin." The mirrored door beside her unclosed at the pressure of her hand, and displayed dozens of such bags, all sending forth a faint fragrance, all carefully marked. She hung the rack on the rod of the cupboard, and picked up from the floor near it gray-blue silk stockings and blue slippers; then she paused, for through the door of the adjoining room there came a low sound, almost like a moan.

Holding the stockings, Claudia moved nearer the door, softly and silently, and looked at the figure in its exquisite morning embroidery, huddled in the big cretonne chair before an untasted breakfast set forth in silver and glass.

There was nothing about the figure that Claudia did not know, from the cloud of bronze hair she kept

simply coiffed, to the little silken-shod feet that trod such curious paths.

Six years ago she had been engaged by the Carson housekeeper, to be ready when the Carson bride came home from her wedding trip. And she had been told that the new Mrs. Carson had been a girl in moderate circumstances, and would probably not know how to dress herself or comport herself, and that her maid's tact and ability in such a situation were what would hold it for her. She had found tact unnecessary and ability accurately measured. The bride's blue eyes looked her through briefly, and approved. The softest of voices gave accurate orders, and suffered no slipshod interpretation of them.

It was no part of Claudia's service to like the woman she served. If it is an exceptional man who is a hero to his valet, it is a more exceptional woman who is beloved by her maid. But there were two things about Mrs. Carson that brought her both affection and excellence from those who served her: she had both justice and ability. Harassed as she was with the arrangement of a household in which abode the restlessness of its master's violent and eccentric impulses, Mrs. Carson never visited her distressed nerves and sensibilities on her servants.

With Claudia, there was something more. It began with the interest all artists have in working with ex-

quisite material, for Claudia was an artist, in her own way. Mrs. Carson's girlish figure, with its gracious curves, her gray-blue eyes, her tapered fingers, her small feet, gave Claudia pleasure that gradually deepened to affection. It became a personal grievance to Claudia when she first debated the necessity of coloring cheeks whitening under the strain of marriage to a young man whose position made his actions merely unusual, save in his own household, where they had all the tension of terror.

When, for the same reason, Claudia became expert in the removal of the traces of tears, and in effacing herself in the stormy scenes that multiplied with the weeks, her grievance deepened. With each task that sought to replace the beauty that was being marred so recklessly, there also deepened hatred of the man who caused it. He became in Claudia's eyes, an unendurable and destructive force.

Claudia, whose life lay in those places where intimate gossip of those they serve relieves the tedium of service, had heard enough about Colin Carson, even before she came to his house, to wonder how any young girl could have married him. But, of course, no girl could know these things told by frightened housekeepers and overpaid valets.

After the first month with Mrs. Carson, Claudia neither endured nor indulged in any gossip about her.

The tragedy of which she was a part became too much a concern of her own to talk about it. It was Claudia who followed Mrs. Carson into the room where Colin Carson was torturing his pet collie, in order to prove that a dog that was fond of its master would show its affection even while being hurt. It was Claudia who telephoned, time and again, for lawyer and doctor when Mr. Carson's rages outstripped all control. It was Claudia who locked Mr. Carson in his room the night he endangered all their lives with the desire Nero had of seeing flames about him; and Claudia who sent for the police while the doctor was binding up Mrs. Carson's burned arm.

It was this police interference that finally brought Colin Carson into court, and thence to the sanatorium for the wealthy insane, where he had been for five years.

Claudia still recalled the quiet that fell like a soft blessing on the house after the terror of Colin Carson's presence had been removed. Gradually the house became a home. From the habitation of a merely rich man, it became the home of a woman who knew the meaning of color, and space, and beauty.

The same influences began to soften every corner of the house. The mechanism of its daily needs became one of noiseless efficiency. Guests began to come and go. Here and there, men and women who were con-

cerned in matters beyond the merely social came for the aid of the immense financial resources that now lay at Mrs. Carson's disposal; a financial responsibility, under which she grew into a woman not easy to bewilder.

To Claudia and those of her own household, she seemed to be growing in many different ways. There was no distress of any member of her household that did not receive her attention.

In these days, Claudia herself found that she yielded readily to the same force. A faint vibration in Mrs. Carson's voice, the caressing quality of every move of her faintly-slanted lids, delicate sensibilities that almost instantly perceived the situation before them; these things sped to the heart, and laid it bare. Almost without realizing it, Claudia would find herself telling of the disappointments of the life she led, its hardness, and its lack of opportunity. Sometimes she marveled at her garrulity but never with regret.

From her intimate vantage point, Claudia saw that she was not the only one whom Mrs. Carson moved to confidence. Wherever they went, there were always two things — personal service from every living thing that came near, and men — all kinds of men — telling the circumstances of their lives, watching for the banishment of unconcern in the blue eyes, and its replacement by interest in their story.

Here and there had been a man to whom Mrs. Carson had been more accessible than to the others, but in these later months these passing friendships had given way to the absorbing interest she seemed to take in the work planned for her by Wrexford Thorne. Claudia, watching the two at their tasks of kindness, sometimes thought of the semblance of a man in the sanatorium, and wondered.

She stood at the door now, and looked at the figure huddled in the big chair. There was despair in every lax line. In all the frightful days that had preceded her husband's removal to the sanatorium, Claudia had not seen Mrs. Carson look like this. And yesterday as Claudia had helped her dress for an interview with Judge Wallace and with Wrexford Thorne, she had thought that she had never seen her look younger or more lovely. She had looked happy; she had been in such a hurry to be dressed, and her voice, as she told Rawlins that she would receive Mr. Thorne in the library, had had a new quality of sweetness Claudia did not remember to have heard before.

Claudia had come down the stairway as Wrexford Thorne came out of the library. She had stood still on the stairway, knowing instinctively that he would not wish to be seen with that look on his face, that appeared to be holding back some unendurable distress. After what seemed to her a long while, Mrs. Carson

had come up-stairs to her dressing-room, stood looking at Clauda blankly for a moment, and then dismissed her abruptly. Apparently the night had brought Mrs. Carson no relief, and the morning small counsel. She turned in her chair as she saw Clauda at the door.

"Clauda," she said, "I must go away some place. I think I must go some place where nobody will know me; where every newspaper in the East will not ring with the fact of my departure and my possible plans; some simple little place where I can not be found, because nobody would dream that I could exist in such a place. I think I must not even take a maid."

"I would so much rather go," said Clauda, "and you will miss a maid. I will try not to be in the way."

Mrs. Carson regarded her with brief inspection and consideration.

"There is no woman I know whose presence I could endure for a day, just now — but you are, of course, never in the way. Suppose I take you as a companion — not as a maid? Leave your black frocks and aprons at home, and take your real clothes. Have you enough?"

"Enough for a small place."

"What kind? Oh, of course, they would be all right — your taste is excellent."

"I have made over many of your own things that

you have given me, Mrs. Carson. They were of the best houses in the world, to begin with. They are good now."

Mrs. Carson looked at the quiet fine face and the trim figure, and nodded.

"And hats?" she said.

"Two. They also have been yours. They are good."

"Very well. You will pack one trunk for yourself and one for me. Use the simplest things I have, or those that look simplest. Take only two or three hats. I know of a little place in the Adirondacks where there is a good hotel, of its kind. It will be before the season, and we shall meet only a few people. I have not been there since my marriage, but I think it will do. You are not to speak of our going to any one. I shall not use my own name. Perhaps I shall use yours. How old are you, Claudia?"

"Thirty-seven."

"I have a fancy, Claudia, for something absolutely different. I want to forget all this show and power of money. If you did not know, how old would you say I am, Claudia — the truth — really — not flatteringly?"

"Mrs. Carson, you are slim and small, and this increases youthfulness. If your hair were coiffed low, and if your figure were, perhaps, not so perfectly cor-

seted — it might be eighteen. I have seen many girls older in the face at eighteen than you."

Mrs. Carson rose, and for a moment there was real interest in her face.

"Let us try," she said.

She hesitated a moment, and the interest gradually died away.

"You have heard," she said, "that there has been no news from Mr. Carson since he escaped from the sanatorium?"

"Yes, Mrs. Carson."

"That is another reason for my going away. I wish to be out of reach of a chance encounter with him." She paused a moment then. "I will write to-day to our hotel, and make my arrangements. Be ready to go to-morrow. Let me think the matter over an hour and then telephone for Doctor Carleton Thorne. I shall want his advice before I go."

The habits of the world are strong upon us. We may have just put aside the one thing that makes life worth living for us, and all else may seem dust and ashes, but we face those near us with no sign, and gather up the thread of such living as we may yet find.

It is the realization of this contrast between the ineffectual what-is with what-might-be — the little cir-

cle of our accomplishment with the measure of our unused abilities — that becomes the way to maturity, Youth has not learned the limitation of its possibilities ; it has not compared the meager what-is with the great what-might-be. Youth has not found the formative power of fact. On the day it learns it, it has turned to grow old.

Nadine Carson, staring, white-faced, at the unlovely fact of her marriage and across it at the love that had come so quietly into every moment of her life, a love for the one man in all her world to whom honor, and loyalty, and decency were more than love, had turned away from youth. Yet maturity is finer than youth, and age can be finest of all, because the taking of life as it is given us and working it out with self-denial, in spite of difficulty, and at the cost of pain, is finer than happiness, and the result is more sacred than success. But there is none of us to whom this turning place does not bring regret and rebellion, for youth is a wonderful thing of golden promises, and the price of the deeper things that make for character is very high.

Clauda knocked at the door.

" Doctor Thorne, Mrs. Carson," she said.

" Ask him to come in here, Clauda."

The lawyer we take into our confidence when we find we can not do without him ; the clergyman we turn

to in hours when the hope of a world to come must pay us for the tragedies of this world; but the doctor enters our house in our moment of weakness, before we have had a chance to set to rights our concerns, either temporal or spiritual.

The doctor is our real confessor, for the healing of our bodies carries with it chances of understanding no priest can have. Many of our illnesses come from things that weigh too heavily on nerves and heart; from the despair that weakens our vitality, from the failure that leaves us a prey to foes without, from the strain that saps our strength, or the overstimulation that demands reactionary retrenchment. The skilful doctor becomes learned in these more subtle causes to which he must bring relief if he is to win success.

Carleton Thorne had small need to be told the meaning of Nadine Carson's white lassitude. But because he believed that a burden that is shared becomes one that can be borne; because he doubted Nadine's ability to look on the thing that had come on her without distortion, Carleton Thorne deliberately sought her confidence. He waited first to hear why she had summoned him.

"Doctor Thorne," she said, "I am going away for a little while. I am going to a place where I shall not be known, and where my being there will not matter to anybody. You remember the habit of the Orient?

When one wishes to hide oneself, or goes forth on some secret mission, one goes 'by the gate of Allah'. You recall that no Arab will inquire further when he is made that answer. I am going by the gate of Allah for a little while. But the mission that I have in mind will presently need your help, and so before I go I want to tell you about it.

"In the heart of the Adirondacks there belong to the Carson estate several hundred acres of very beautiful country, with a house too large for ordinary living purposes. I went there during the first weeks of my marriage. I have not been there since, and the place has been quite empty, save for its caretakers. I am going to Saranac to look the place over, to see if it can be converted into a convalescent hospital for the great number of tuberculous patients — your — brother — and I have found who are not able to enter such institutions as exist, either charitably or otherwise, and yet need the help.

"I have long had this idea, but I could never bring myself to return to Carson to look it over until now. I am going to-morrow with Clauda, and after I have made my plans I shall send for you, to see if they are practicable. It is only a night's run to Saranac from here. Do you think you will be able to come?"

"I shall be very glad to have a hand in such a plan. Are you asking Wrexford to help you, also?"

She turned away.

"No," she said quietly.

"He will be disappointed. This has long been a thing he wanted to do."

"That is why I am doing it."

"Then — why —"

"He told me yesterday that the time had come for me to do these things for the sake of doing them, not because they were somebody else's ambitions."

Carleton Thorne smiled at her.

"How absurd!" he said. "These things are Rex's specialty. He has made such needs a lifelong study; you are interested in what he has learned, and you have the money to make his ideas practicable; he has the experience that will make the use of your money practicable. There could be no better combination. Why should either of you work alone, since you both have need of each other? Nothing could be more fortunate for both of you than the finding of somebody else who can so perfectly supply the other's needs."

Nadine lifted her head with a sudden direct look at the man who brought to the problem before her, that had seemed so full of tragedy, a breath of that rarest thing in the world — common sense.

"Yet even such good fortune," she said, "can have an end — if —"

Nadine rose suddenly and began to move to and fro. It was as if some long self-control had given way beneath the sudden expression of her own inmost conviction by this outsider.

"Oh," she said finally, "it is no use! Your brother and I have met in too narrow a place. We can not go on with this pretense of friendship — why should I not say so to you? And, failing friendship, what is there for us? What can we do? He is the rector of one of the most influential parishes in the country. He has an immense power for good. A thousand eyes follow all he does, a thousand lives are patterned after what he thinks. And it is his very life; it is his work. Neither I, nor any other woman, has a right to stand between a man and his work — not even — for — love.

"Do you not suppose I have searched for a way other than going out of his life? Have I not said there was no greater thing than this love? That on it we might build a new friendship? That between such as we anything was possible of self-restraint? But is it? This is a man to whom the slightest breath of scandal would mean an utter destruction of his power for good. And the world is overkeen in its search for such things, and swift to understand. There is no such thing as a secret. Love — love be-

trays itself in a hundred unforeseen ways; in suddenly softened voices, in a chance look — and the world would not credit our denial.

“If Wrexford Thorne were not a rector — it might be done — but a man so magnetic that women can never be done considering his every appearance, a social servant, a teacher — no! If, perhaps, it were some other woman than I; if I had lived with less disregard of opinion, if I were less conspicuous, if there had been fewer men in my life —”

She paused, visualizing these men, whose pursuit of her had had its interest and its fascination, for which she must now pay so high a price. What had any one of them been to her, that she should have now to consider them? Not even her friends — mere followers of this thing in her that, even in her narrow girlhood, had brought Colin Carson to demand her in marriage; this allurement she barbed with her delicate appeal, her veiled and subtle intelligence, her voice seductive of their confidence. Until Wrexford Thorne had come into her life, she had not even known how great the value of a man's friendship might be to a woman.

Finding that Nadine had come to the end of her confidence, Carleton Thorne answered quietly, as if he spoke of the most casual of daily events.

“Wrexford and I, as you know, are more than brothers. We are close and congenial friends. He, in

his way, is a bit of a doctor; I am a bit of a preacher. In a good many years among a good many women, I have never been even moderately concerned over Wrexford's relations with them, in spite of the fact that women seem to force their intimate concerns on him. He has, and I knew it, an ability to eliminate the personal that would check the most reckless of women. Even in such a hotbed of gossip as a parish, presided over by a young and unmarried rector of ability and distinction, none of it seems to have touched Rex.

"But, from the very moment that you came into all our lives, I have known that you were there to stay. I have watched you both for a long time; first confidently, then anxiously, and finally with a feeling of fatality. You and Rex were too perfectly mated to escape—love; too swiftly intelligent not to recognize it when it came. That there could be no degradation of love to compromise between you I knew. But I knew also that Rex was one of those few to whom love of the one person meant what marriage means to the majority.

"Facts denied by every foolish oath, and thoughtless promise, and broken tie, can yet be true. There are still those for whom there is but one being in the world at whose hands they can accept love. To a man and woman, here and there, to give up such love is to give

up all possibility of the best life has to offer that each of us craves. To give it up means to live for ever after with the second best, not destitute of happiness, perhaps, but in a world made narrow and kept cold.

“ I do not see why this should be imposed on either you or Rex. All of his training, all of his ideals, all his experience fits him for a friendship with you that, for all its foundation of love, need never overstep the most careful limitations of convention. His world will not suddenly turn and gossip about him because he finds that, with your help, he can accomplish good things he plans. And if they do, gossip that has no foundation of truth does not endure.

“ There is not only pleasure for both of you in knowing each other, in being with each other ; but each has a real need of what the other can give. Will you give this up for the lack of a little faith in your own self-control? Have you both not been trained to control and to endurance? Why should you suppose it is suddenly going to fail you? As for those who look on — what is it to them, or to you, provided you keep this love an honorable thing?

“ The world has come to a pretty pass if friendship can not exist between a man and a woman without a hue and a cry, if the world can not believe in a man’s probity and a woman’s decency merely because they

happen to love each other. I do not believe Wrexford means to impose such a weak sacrifice on you. If he does, he is making a mistake, and he will be the first one to find it out.

"If your husband loved you, if you were living with him and held the responsibility of his happiness, or his success, in your hands, this course that absolutely separates you would be the only one to take. The fact that he is your husband will prevent you from marriage. It will hold you from all expression of love; but that is all you owe your husband, and you do not even owe him this; you owe it to yourself and to the man you love. Sacrifice goes too far if it demands any more of you."

Nadine looked at the doctor with eyes in which hope began to dawn, faintly at first, then waxing into radiance.

"There are some sacrifices," said the doctor, "that are nothing else than self-mutilation. I think we are not given deep instincts by One who wishes to make their prophecy a lie. Between that which we need for our completion and attainment there is no great gulf fixed. Only the effort needful for the holding fast to a great hope, only the necessity to keep the hope ideal, lie between aspiration and achievement. You say if Rex were other than he is, if he were not a rector, there might be hope. Because he is what he is, be-

cause his life is set to the service of the ideal, because endurance for the right's sake is his birthright,— there is hope for you both, and it should be a hope that means enrichment of life, not poverty of life.”

Nadine had been standing still, listening, as if she could not hear too much, her whole being awakening to this new call of the mind and heart. This would indeed be worth living for and striving for. She leaned toward the doctor.

“Can you make Wrexford see this — as you — do?”

“Did you not know this was what he meant when he came to you yesterday?”

Nadine shook her head.

“Yesterday — I had but one thought, I had but one hope. I had hoped for release. It was this hope, told to your brother as a certainty, that betrayed him to an acknowledgment of his love. It — oh, it is so wonderful to be loved by one you love — that it is no wonder we find it hard to believe, no wonder it has to be said to us over and over. Perhaps without this larger hope of release from my marriage I might never have really known that I was loved. And then yesterday I found that I was not to be released, that the woman's claim was only an effort at blackmail. After the vision of release, it seemed to me that there was nothing left to me — but to give up. And Wrex-

ford — spoke only of — of what I might still find —” Her voice trailed into silence.

Carleton Thorne’s voice lightened into a tone of the most casual comment.

“These days in which you have no news of Mr. Carson must naturally be unsettled ones. And there is nothing you can do about it save to wait. I think you have chosen very wisely in selecting this time to consider your Adirondacks plan. It is delightful there in autumn, too. The whole thing will do you good. I hope you will spend half of each day in the saddle, getting back your color and storing up strength. Then, when you are ready for us, Rex and I will come up, with Amy and Judge Wallace, too, if they can get off, and we will talk about a suitable staff for your hospital, about nurses and physicians, and expenses. Rex will be jubilant. He has a dozen such cases right now with which he is bothering me to death because he can find no place for them, and they are not available for any of the charitable institutions we already have.”

He rose and held out his hand, looking on a different woman from the one he had faced at his coming.

“But I thought you and Amy were leaving for your wedding trip next week?” said Nadine.

“I have a difficult case I can not leave quite so soon. There will be a little time before we go in which we can help you. I shall hope to hear that you are ready

for us in — say, about a week — and I shall go from here to tell Wrexford about it, and encourage him about the fate of his patients, who need what you are going to prepare.”

Nadine put her hand in his. A faint color lent promise to her cheeks.

As the door closed behind him, she moved to the window to watch him as he went. This was what it meant to help others, to see things squarely and in proportion. All over the world women were living crippled lives, denied as she had been and was, but un-recompensed as was she. She was young, and incredibly rich. Truly she had no right to spend her hours moaning over their emptiness. Before her moved the long procession of burdened women: women pretending love in weariness and disgust; women bent over long seams, brain-seared with endless stitches; women unfit to earn their bread, thrusting shame aside for yet a little life; women too fragile to fight, forced to the grim battle of the strong; women — thousands of them — bearing in their hearts the hurt of the unloved. All her life was too short to reach these needs, now that it might keep at its heart the love that made it life.

CHAPTER XVII

"Hastily they gathered then,
Each the loves and lives of men."

SARANAC LAKE glittered and danced in greeting to a sun that, coming out late from behind an encompassing fog, stripped the mountains of their gray, and blue, and pearl veils, and flung over all the little pine-decked islands ropes of diamonds, and even a misty rainbow here and there.

On the porch of the Algonquin Hotel, that lay in a little hollow of wild woodland, where just enough trees had been cut to permit a view of all this glittering dancing water, a few early guests walked to and fro, waiting the arrival of the tally-ho with the mail and, perhaps, a guest or two. In the sunniest corner of the piazza sat Hutchinson, of the Adirondacks division of the New York Central.

He came every year to Saranac, first on business, second because it was a habit, and third because he was an Adirondacks cure, and he felt it his duty to spend his vacations there; though it had been ten years since he had first brought his cough and a heart very sore over the circumstances that surrounded the break-

ing of his engagement, to these mountains for cure. Both heart and lungs had responded, though Hutchinson had never gained the courage to become engaged again. Sometimes he said that it was because of these circumstances surrounding his broken engagement that he did not marry. They had begun with his ill-health and concluded with the advent of another man. Whenever Hutchinson thought of this other man, he grew bitter. It had been a distressing affair. There had been times when he wondered if he had done well to leave the girl he had cared for during most of his youth to such a man; perhaps, if he had not been ill, he would not have done so.

There were other times when Hutchinson said he did not marry because tuberculous people ought not to marry, but on a morning like this, when he looked out over the jewel-decked islands and took in the stinging tonic air, he found himself believing that he had been too long cured to count his tuberculous tendency as a real bar to sentiment. He still had a faint hope that he might yet find the woman who would be glad to spend the next twenty years with him, even if his ancient foe should find him again. She must be a woman of the right age. He was forty-two and there were many things he could not tolerate — silly laughter and chatter just for sound's sake, and the amazing assertiveness of the American girl.

Hutchinson believed that the quiet and graceful woman who did not demand the center of the stage, and who only spoke when she had something to say — the woman who could think for herself, and refrain from announcing her thoughts from the housetops, was growing rarer each day. If she was self-possessed and able, she was assertive and declamative. If she was modest and retiring, she could not manage her own bank balance, or plan her own affairs. Hutchinson hoped before he was fifty to meet a woman who, if she were suddenly to find her husband invalided, could yet manage to keep accounts straight and check baggage naturally, as a man would, and not blatantly, as if it were a phenomenon.

Heavens, how he hated women who talked! He brought his gaze back from the islands to the tally-ho drawing up to the porch. Two women and a young man descended. The man was the kind who would always, probably, be called young, unless he lost some of his glossy black hair, or covered his short upper lip and prominent chin with a beard. He was neither tall nor overbroad, but the symmetry and strength of his medium build were beautiful to see as he sprang down from the tally-ho and stood aside with a fine unconsciousness of the girl descending.

Hutchinson chuckled. The chap was probably aware of every move the girl made. He looked the

kind of man that would be, and for all his unconsciousness, he would probably try to get introduced to her at once. Hutchinson did not like girls, so he passed over this one to look at the other woman, who might perhaps be thirty-three, or four, or five. A grave fine face, with observant eyes! Hutchinson marked the competent manner in which she feed the driver and attended to their two trunks. Through the window he saw her register, followed by the young man, who, after he had inscribed his own name, evidently read the woman's.

Hutchinson smiled, knowing very well that every other guest would do the same thing as soon as he or she conveniently could. It was convenient for him very soon. "Miss Clauda Murray," he read. The young girl was not registered. She did not look like a maid. The young man was inscribed somewhat ornately — Maurice Langdon — and New York was appended to each name.

"What's the matter with the girl?" asked Hutchinson of the clerk, who was often his only companion in the early summer days of his annual vacation. "Has she no name?"

"Perhaps she can't write," said the clerk. "She hasn't done so, anyhow. It was arranged for before she came."

"She looked young to be ashamed of her name."

"Maybe she's seen it too much at the top of a program, or something like that. You can't just tell if you give her a good look, how young she is. No, there are no wrinkles; her face is young, but there's a kind of discontented look in her eyes — well, I couldn't just tell you."

Presently the clerk was required to offer an explanation to young Magee, the doctor at the sanatorium, and to Mrs. Schultz, who always liked to know, and to the trained nurse, who took care of the woman who had a cough. No, the woman with the cough was not tuberculous. The hotel did not receive such patients. Several of the young girls came to him with questions, and finally the clerk got tired, and amused himself with weaving a new theory for each inquirer, so that by noon a buzz of gossip and a mass of conjecture brightened every eye as Alphonse guided the two women to their luncheon.

Hutchinson observed that it was the table in the square bay-window overlooking the woods that was given them, and, by the exact shading of Alphonse's manner, he concluded it had been a good fee. At his own table, a little murmur of critical comment on the two women stopped as young Langdon — son of the famous New York surgeon — was given a seat next to Hutchinson.

The men nodded at each other.

"Is this your first visit, Mr. Langdon?"

"Yes, I have never been here before."

"Did you come for a vacation?"

"No. I have been sent by the Department of Agriculture to isolate the weevil that is destroying the pines on the Carson estate."

"Have they opened up the place?" asked Hutchinson.

"I think not," said Langdon, "though I have not been over there. Some time ago the caretaker notified Mrs. Carson that the pines were dying, and she asked for somebody to examine them. They tell me that the place has been shut up for years — that Mrs. Carson does not like woods. They say she likes cities."

"She has certainly been conspicuous in a good many of them," said Hutchinson.

In answer to a few questions, Hutchinson further imparted that it was rather quiet at Saranac, but that the horses were good, and for the young people there was a dance once a week. Then he laughed at Langdon's involuntary glance at the girl in the bay-window.

"Sure, she dances," he said.

"I wonder?" said the young man. "I came up on the train with them, and I can not make them out — their relation to each other, I mean. The girl just sat back and let the older woman carry all the grips and run the whole thing. And the older woman scarcely

says a word, and, when she does, in the quietest kind of way."

Hutchinson looked at the woman.

"That suits me," he approved. "She looks capable. Some business woman off for a vacation with a younger relative who has money she doesn't have to work for," said Hutchinson.

"Mrs. Carson, the men are never done asking about you," said Clauda a few days later. "The women answer that you are to be suspected for many reasons."

"Chiefly because the men ask, isn't it?" returned Mrs. Carson. "It is always so. The women — save the one with the cough and her handsome nurse — I have scarcely seen. What are they like?"

"There are some fat spiteful ones, and some thin suspicious ones, and many who sit, and sew, and listen. There is a Mrs. Schultz, who, I think, can not live longer if she does not soon learn your name. There is a maiden lady, with a constant cold in her head, who has talked much with me."

"Clauda, it would appear to me that the tall man, with the grim mouth and the gray hair, has shared the maiden lady's preference for speech with you."

"Mr. Hutchinson? He is almost the only one here who has asked me no questions at all."

Nadine looked at Claudia's trim figure in its simple white linen, at her glossy brown hair and well-shaped hands, and found that she compared very well with the women about her. A little farther down the veranda, Mrs. Schultz sat in a rocking-chair that appeared to fit her tightly, looking complacently at her daughter, whose rounded outlines already suggested a possible following of her mother's physique in later life. Her daughter was chatting with Langdon and young Magee. Occasionally the mother spoke to the elderly maiden lady, who sat near her, head bent over her embroidery.

"There's that girl," said Mrs. Schultz, increasing the number of her chins to look at Nadine over her glasses. "I told Josephine that she could not talk to her. I found them together last night on the porch. I simply will not have it. Josephine says that all the plainness

Others on the porch gave the girlish gray-blue figure their attention. Mr. Langdon's conversation, as he looked at Nadine, suddenly lapsed. Miss Schultz followed his glance with a scornful flicker of her eyes.

"She is going to ride this afternoon," she said. "The clerk has been busy all morning getting a horse good enough for her. She is going over the Carson estate."

"She can't get in without a permit," said Langdon a little eagerly. "I wonder if she knows it?"

"Why don't you ask her?"

Miss Schultz's expression conveyed the folly of such interest.

"I think I will," said Langdon promptly. "Excuse me."

He moved to the piazza steps near which Nadine sat with Claudia. Mrs. Schultz took a more resentful notice of this desertion than did her daughter. She saw the young man smiling at Nadine, and she watched curiously the looks cast upon her by every woman on the veranda. Claudia had risen and moved down the steps, where she was joined by Mr. Hutchinson.

Though Langdon had chatted with Claudia and Nadine after the informal habit of a mountain hotel before the season, he was as yet guiltless of all knowl-

edge of the latter's name. Claudia had seemed abnormally clever in avoiding any calling of her companion by name. So Langdon had to open his speech with Nadine without salutation, possessed as he was of the American shyness over demanding names.

"I have discovered, in the way such things are known in a hotel, that you are riding to Carson today."

"Yes, I am, Mr. Langdon."

He was very young, and ruddy, and strong. Nadine looked at him thoughtfully.

"Do you know, *Excellenza*, that you can not get into Carson without a permit?"

"Are you quite sure?" said Nadine.

"Quite sure. You know, I ride there every day."

"I know," she answered. "You dig up the pine trees with your finger nails, do you not? What ones are you working on now?"

"The group of pines isolated on a little island in the lake. I am experimenting with them, but I am digging them up with my teeth. This variety resists finger nails."

Nadine smiled again, and even Claudia, who had paused discreetly out of earshot, looked on with interest.

"It is the first time," said Hutchinson, "I have seen her smile since she came. You won't even talk a

little bit about her, will you?" he concluded, observing that Claudia made no answer.

"Oh, I never talk," said the woman softly. "But I will listen to you with pleasure."

To such perfection, Hutchinson gave silent praise. Then he said: "Well, I think the little duchess has been, upon a time, both sad and bored. Perhaps she has been publicly persecuted, so that she prefers an incognito; but she looks, for all her youth, as if she had lived much, and needed rest; and, for all her boredom, as if she had rested some, and needed youth."

Claudia made him no answer. In the meantime, Mrs. Carson had taken an envelope and pencil from Langdon, and spreading it on her knee, she had begun to draw on the envelope. Langdon bent over her. The women on the veranda watched. Miss Schultz took counsel with her mother.

"Well," said that lady, "it is because she has nerve, and she doesn't ask anything of him, not even to pull up a chair. I guess you can have a horse if you want one."

Apparently quite unconscious of her critical surveillance, Nadine described little crooked marks on the paper, while young Langdon looked at her hair, and her delicate provocative profile, and her small ringless hands, that, for all their tapering quality, yet

suggested capability — the kind of hand to manage a horse by touch, not strength.

"You see," said Nadine, suddenly sending him an oblique glance from under a cloud of wind-tossed hair, "you cut off five miles going to the lake by this path."

"How does it happen that you know the bridle paths of Carson so well?" said Langdon.

"For the same reason that you know its trees well," said Nadine. "I was employed there once."

Langdon let this sink in with a slight feeling of dismay. One can not have at command for years the power of unlimited money without acquiring a certain subtle atmosphere of achievement. Close about Nadine hung the manner of one used to command; it expressed itself in a hundred little ways that young Langdon could not reconcile with "employment".

Nadine saw him pull himself together, and her swift perceptions caught at once the slight, very slight, change in his manner as he asked if he might ride with her that afternoon. She rose as she consented, dismissing him with a regal little nod that caused him new wonder.

He was young enough to lay his perplexity before Hutchinson at luncheon, but that gentleman only laughed at him.

"She employed there!" he scoffed. "She was only

rubbing in on you the fact that you were, and that that was the only reason you had for knowing the place well. You were probably patronizing with your permits and your information. Perhaps she has been there as a guest. In Carson's time there were some rather brilliant house parties there."

"What's become of Carson?"

"He went mad. There's a crazy strain in the family. I was here when he brought his wife to Carson for her honeymoon. It read well. Mr. Colin Carson took his beautiful young wife to his Adirondacks place for the honeymoon. Imagine being deposited alone in that tremendous place, honeymooning with a thing like Colin Carson. I do not wonder that she would never go back, and that it has been closed ever since."

"Nevertheless, it is from Mrs. Carson," said Langdon, "that I have my commission to discover what ails the pines. It is from her that I receive checks for my services."

"It would be a pity to see them die. Still, it is a wonder that Mrs. Carson has time to plan for dying pines."

"Why?"

"I suppose she is one of the most-sought-after women of her city."

Hutchinson recalled the rumors about her, trying to fit them in with her interest in dying pines. He had

spent the morning in the freight office of the railroad he helped to officer, and there he had seen the billing of two automobiles — a little runabout and a larger touring car — to be sent to Miss Claudia Murray, at the Algonquin Hotel, freight paid by check drawn by Nadine Carson. Hutchinson had been wondering ever since if it were possible that Miss Claudia Murray's companion could be Mrs. Carson.

He had even pondered, in the face of Langdon's evidently absorbed interest in Miss Claudia's companion, over the advisability of a suggestion or two. He was a nice young chap, and though he talked too much, Hutchinson saw no reason for his being fooled; and then Hutchinson took a look at the woman lunching over in the bay-window, and wondered if the man lived who, at Langdon's age, would mind being fooled by her. Then, too, there was the patronizing tone of voice when Langdon spoke of her having been employed. It would not hurt him, once in a way, to find himself egregiously mistaken.

Still considering Mrs. Carson, Hutchinson spoke again.

"I recall there was a story of that Russian grand duke who wanted to marry her. It made a big fuss. And the crown prince who wanted her without marriage, and young Brooks-Chadwick, and that chap in South Africa."

"Money works queer spells," sighed Langdon.

"Not that queer," said Hutchinson. "That's woman, not money."

"I suppose she is interesting and good-looking, both."

"Oh, you are young!" This time it was Hutchinson that sighed. "If she is that interesting, what difference do her looks make? You probably want them pink and white and naïve. You do not know distinction when you see it. I have no doubt you prefer unsophistication that says, 'Oh, Mr. Langdon!' to experience that causes you to do the exclaiming yourself. No Mrs. Carson for you."

The young man bridled.

"I am going riding with the young lady this afternoon. If she has been employed at Carson, she will probably know all about Mrs. Carson. I'll see what I can find out about her."

Hutchinson laughed.

"I'll lay you a box of cigars you don't find out a thing more than you know now."

"I'll take you," said Langdon.

CHAPTER XVIII


"The Silent Shadow over all,—
Ah, blind of eye, and dull of ear,
Its signs invite, its voices call,
The things of dust, ye see and hear!"

TO Nadine, her return to Carson after six years was fraught with memories whose bitterness she did not wish to measure. She could not bring herself just yet to face the great gray house on the hill, where, six years before, she had come as a young bride. She meant to look about the grounds, to ride over their miles of bridle paths, and perhaps drive her motor about the roads, before she went to the house. She wished to make her first investigations before she notified the caretaker of her arrival, and that was the reason that she did not go in the lodge-gate, but cut across the country to a bridle path that she knew of, that skirted the lake among moss-covered rocks and ferns that brushed the knees of her horse. Neither was Nadine averse to being accompanied by a stranger, who could know nothing of the thoughts that every recognized landmark of the place brought back to her.

The simplest of us are many-sided, and to see but one phase of the men and women we meet is a weariness to the spirit. Nadine knew what it was to pick out in a man's mind what differentiated him from other men, but in Langdon there seemed to her a little more than his youth on which to concentrate.

As the horses swung round the curve of the lake, she moved the conversational pawn from the hotel and its guests to books; but Langdon did not read. Yes, he liked O. Henry's stories, but he could by no means assert that O. Henry had caught his fashion of opening a story, with its little paragraph in the shape of a text, from Kipling. He did not know Kipling.

Nadine met this youthfulness with an ingenuousness that would have betrayed her to an older man. But Langdon liked it. He found himself moving easily from the things he did not know to the things he did. He knew every café in New York — East Side, Fifth Avenue, Harlem, and Broadway. He knew the plays of the present time, and even as far back as last year. As Nadine let her eyes rest on him, he found an almost boyish impulse sweep through him to display all the small points of his knowledge. He had to hold himself from boasting. Nadine allowed herself to be instructed. Presently she led him to his profession. There were grave men of large accomplishment who



would have doubted their ears to have heard Nadine's :

"And what is entomology?"

Langdon essayed to be witty.

"It means different things at different times," he said. "Last year it meant peach trees; this year it means pine trees."

"That is a definition of forestry. Where do the weevils and other tree destroyers come in?"

"They come in bottles when I get through with them, and sometimes I stick them on pins."

Nadine let her thoughts stray to her own problems, while Langdon made his opinions of entomology as a profession into a glib discourse. The horses threaded a moss-covered path through a cathedral of pines.

It suddenly occurred to Langdon that he was missing his opportunity of winning his wager with Hutchinson.


"This Mrs. Carson," said Langdon, "for whom I am investigating the condition of the pines, seems to know more about such things than most women do."

"How do you know?" said Nadine.

"She has written to me several times about the trees at Carson. They are good letters."

"Perhaps her secretary writes them. These fabulously rich women seldom write their own letters."

Langdon gave her a disconcerted look.



"You must know her. You said you had been employed at Carson."

"I know her — a little." Nadine gave no information as to the nature of her employment.

"Is she pretty?" the man asked.

"She is clothed by the best artists in the world. She is dressed by the most expert maid. She is watched over and waited on by people who spend their lives increasing her effectiveness. These things are more durable than beauty."

Langdon stared.

"Hutchinson says men are foolish about her. There must be some reason besides her clothes and the way she gets herself up."

"Yet it made a little difference what Du Barry wore," said Nadine lightly. "You recall how she kept to violets. And the silk Pompadour loved still bears her name."

Langdon grew restless.

"You speak of this woman as if she were a well-dressed doll. She is an entomologist."

"What use is it for a woman to have brains if she does not know how to do her hair?"

Langdon discovered that he had been turned from his subject. He came back to it abruptly.

"How do you suppose a woman of brains could have married Colin Carson?"


Nadine's eyes became somber.

"She was not a woman. She was only an unformed girl, unwise with that terrible ignorance of men and of life that only a very young girl can have. What does a girl know of what marriage may mean to a woman?"

Nadine paused, her voice vibrating with hidden pain. She seemed to have forgotten her auditor. Langdon could make no answer, held silent by sheer astonishment. These were scarcely the words of the young girl he supposed her to be. Her face, as she had spoken them, had a look of one who had lived.

The horses paused beside the small barb-wired gate hidden among the bushes. Langdon sprang off his horse and held the gate open for her. She passed through with no look at him. A little shudder shook her. As her horse moved several lengths ahead of Langdon's, she fell again into thought.

Down in the bottom of her own heart, for all her bitterness against it, Nadine knew that even her mistaken marriage had trained her to qualities the wife of a powerful man would need; to resourcefulness, to poise, to insight. The responsibilities that had fallen on her with the mere management of this great estate had cleared and developed her mind. The path she had had to take as a woman holding the power of great wealth, unhusbanded and yet married, could not



help but deepen both character and sense of values. She knew she was better fitted by what she had gone through to be the wife of the man she loved; better fitted to be a mother, whose task was to train sons and daughters to fight the good fight.

The path began to defile through a rocky cleft. Some subtle complexity of atmosphere about Nadine kept Langdon from intruding on her silence, and set him to considering her more thoughtfully. What position could she have occupied in this strange Carson household? Astounding possibilities occurred to him, and were checked by his necessity to watch his horse. They were descending a rough path carpeted with slippery pine-needles through a miniature cañon cut out of rocks covered with dense foliage. The pines seemed to grow out of the sides of the cliff almost as if they could thrive on bare limestone.

"They make their own soil with their falling needles, do they not?" said Nadine. "This place used to be called 'Thousand Pines' until Colin Carson bought it. I wonder if this weevil that is killing the pines is the same one they found at Tryon last year?"

Langdon stared at her.

"Why, how do you know?" he said. "A minute ago you were asking me what entomology was."

"I?" She considered. "Was that a reason for my not knowing what it was — the asking you?"

A dull flush spread across Langdon's face. Silence fell between them again. The young man followed her with bewilderment. Nadine's thoughts returned to Colin Carson, who had first ridden these paths with her. As they emerged from the rocky cleft, her horse suddenly shied. Nadine lifted her curb, looking about her for a reason for the horse's unrest, and finding none. Langdon watched her. She had brought her horse to a stop, and was considering two paths that branched off from the foot of the cleft. One led back to the lake. The other led to the house. With the vision of the house that the path recalled to her, there returned the memory of Colin Carson as he was in those days—the eyes shifting, even then, from intentness to vacancy; the upper lip ever ready to draw back from the prominent teeth. It became a snarl in later days.

She looked up at the cliff beside her. Farther back there used to be a small summer-house set on a sudden rise of rock that gave a view of all the surrounding country. As she looked up at the cliff, Langdon saw her stiffen and grow still. Every tint of the wild-rose color that the ride had brought to her face fled. With eyes wide and startled, she stared at the dense mass of foliage overhanging the cliff.

Langdon came to her side. 'Almost involuntarily



his hand closed on the small pistol he carried about during the lonely rides his work necessitated.

"What is it?" he asked.

She made no answer for a moment. Then: "It is gone," she said. "Did you see it?"

"See what?"

"Eyes staring down on us. A man's face, with lips drawn back, snarling!"

"I saw nothing."

Nadine bent over her saddle, shivering.

"I am obsessed," she said, "obsessed with the vision of Colin Carson. Let us go back."

"But Mr. Carson has — he is not in his right mind. He is in an asylum."

"He seemed to be staring down at me from that cliff," she said, forcing herself to look up once more at the screen of foliage that hid the top of the cliff. "His eyes had the same malevolent threatening look they had when"—she paused suddenly, looking at Langdon—"when he threatened to kill his wife for keeping him in a sanatorium, if he ever got out."

"He isn't out," said Langdon.

"Yes, he is," said Nadine. "They do not know where he is. They have not known for ten days."

A crunching of boughs fell on the silence of the woods. Nadine's horse quivered.

"Do you hear?" she asked.

"A decayed branch of one of the dead pines has fallen," said Langdon. "Do you want me to look?"

"No, let us go back," said Nadine.

They went back over their way in silence. As the barbed gate closed behind them, Nadine spoke again to Langdon.

"Have you seen anybody about the place in your work?"

"Nobody but the lodge keeper and a man or two working about the place."

"You have not been near the house?"


"No. It is too far off from where I am working for me to go. And I do not know my way about these winding roads yet. Yesterday I saw a rather fine-looking woman on one of the paths near the lodge. I spoke to the lodge keeper about it, and he said it was one of the women they had engaged to go over the house. They open up the house ever so often. It is too bad to let a place like this go to waste."

"Even if it is haunted," said Nadine.

"Something has frightened you," said Langdon.

"I have frightened myself."

No color had returned to Nadine's face, even after the sharp canter with which they ended their ride at the hotel veranda. Claudia met her with alarm. Upstairs in her room Nadine fell to shivering.



"You are ill, Mrs. Carson?" asked Claudia. "Let me send for Doctor Thorne. It takes but a night's travel for him to come."

"I have been seeing visions, Claudia," said Nadine. "I shall never have the courage to put this thing through."

Claudia watched her silently.

"Yet this morning," continued Nadine, "in the village I passed a man who had stopped to cough, holding on to the porch of the house I came out of. He was plainly a gentleman, but he looked sick, and hungry, and far too thinly clad, and he could hardly hold himself erect while he coughed and coughed. His coat was buttoned up to his chin because there was no collar beneath it. Yet he was not a man to whom one could offer money. This is but one of hundreds of such pitiful cases. The doctors here tell me that these people come with barely enough money to bring them, hoping to get work to enable them to live in this climate, and there is no work for them. They — they starve — and I have thousands of idle dollars, and this great place going to waste!"

She brooded for a few moments on the problem before her.

"Some of these people could be cured with even a little help — help I could easily give them. And I am frightened into a panic by my own fancies. It is high

time that I made myself face these ghosts. To-morrow I will go over the house from top to bottom."

"But you will need Doctor Thorne eventually. May I not send for him, even if it is earlier than you first planned to have him here? You look badly, Mrs. Carson. The place will not be ready any sooner if you should get ill."

"I will write to him," said Nadine. "He is very busy; perhaps he can not come."

"Let me wire him, Mrs. Carson, asking when it will be convenient for him to come."

"Do that, then," said Nadine.

Clauda hesitated a moment.

"You have something else you wish to ask me?" said Nadine. Then she turned suddenly. "Clauda — Clauda, you are blushing! What have you been doing all afternoon?"

"I — I have been talking with Mr. Hutchinson."

Mrs. Carson bent toward her, smiling.

"Clauda, I have never seen two people past thirty-five so entirely silent, yet so persistently bent on talking together. Do you realize that at a place like this a man and a woman can see more of each other in a few days than they could in a year's time in town?"

"Mrs. Carson," said Clauda, and her voice had about it a certain gravity that held Nadine's attention, "I could never have even made the acquaintance of

such a man in town; nor could the acquaintance have grown as it has, had I come here under any other conditions than those you arranged.

"All my life I have been so situated that I have never been able to meet men in plain friendly fashion. Among the men in service, as I am, there has been no man that I wanted especially to know. The others, those to whom a woman in my position is fair game, have been worse. And my own people are all gone.

"I—I have greatly enjoyed—this acquaintance. It has just begun, of course, but I think, if you do not mind, I would rather it did not go further on any false foundation. May I tell Mr. Hutchinson the place I occupy in—in your household?"

"Assuredly, Claudia. Tell him also that you are invaluable to me, that you have always been loyalty itself. Shall I tell him, Claudia?"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Carson. I merely wanted your permission to tell your name."

"He looks shrewd, Claudia. You may find he needs very little telling."

The girl turned away.

"I must find if—if it makes a difference," she said.

At dinner that night, Hutchinson chaffed Langdon over the meagerness of the information he had elicited about Mrs. Carson during his long ride.

"I found out that she is not pretty," said Langdon, "but just well-dressed."

"Oh, you did!" Hutchinson chuckled. "What do you call pretty?"

"Oh, come!" said Langdon.

He bowed to Mrs. Schultz as that lady took her place at a table farther down the room.

"They are having a party to-night," continued Langdon, "a german. Mrs. Schultz and some of the other women are giving it, but they are not going to ask the young lady I rode with to-day. They say she is some kind of maid or companion of Miss Murray's, who is being permitted to eat in the dining-room to keep Miss Murray company. They have asked Miss Murray but not the other one."

"It isn't often a companion has a horse to ride, or leisure to ride it all afternoon, is it?" said Hutchinson.

"Well, you know, she said she had been employed at Carson. These other women say —"

"Well, excuse me!" said Hutchinson. "I can get along all right, the short time I stay in a hotel, if I do not have to hear what the veranda gossips say."

"You can't tell," said Langdon, "but what there may be truth in what they say."

"A hundred thousand Albigenses said the same thing about Saint Paul, and doubtless reflected bitterly on it as they were being burned alive."

This was quite beyond Langdon, and the conversation lapsed for a few minutes. He despatched his salad, and then spoke again:

"Do you suppose she will be hurt at not being invited to a party where everybody else in the place is going?"

"Who?" said Hutchinson shortly. "The mysterious one, or Miss Murray?"

"Oh, Miss Murray is asked — the other one."

Hutchinson laughed out loud. Those dining near him looked up.

"Langdon," said Hutchinson, "for the love of heaven, throw away your crutches! I am not possessed with snobbish sentiments, but those who have allowed their legs to petrify are impossible to walk with, however well they can sew, or knit, or pick cherries."

"What on earth do you mean by that?" said Langdon.

"It is not my business to educate a Harvard entomologist. But, just as you sit here now, look at those two women over there in the bay-window. Miss Murray is acting her part pretty well. That is because she is naturally quiet and competent. But you could see, if you would, that she always drops behind to allow the other woman to go first into the dining-room; that she waits for her to order, that she never

intrudes suggestion or opinion, that she draws up the chairs, and gets the mail from the private office.

"Now, I don't know much about women's clothes, and you, being a younger bachelor than I, ought to know less; but look at that gown. It is one of the simple kind you read about, that it takes somebody like Worth to make. There's a yoke, or vest, or whatever it is, of lace, and some other lace on it. The man who shares my apartment in town with me is in the lace business, and I know lace. That stuff makes the dress cost several hundred dollars, and it isn't the girl's best dress; probably just an ordinary one. It seems like a little thing, but if an ordinary dress has lace like that on it, you can bet she's not companioning any woman for a living."

Langdon considered.

"Well, you know there are queer stories about Colin Carson and women. When she seemed to know the paths about Carson so well this afternoon, I wondered —"

Hutchinson's laugh interrupted Langdon again.

"You've the makings of a scientist, for sure," he said. "Thirty years old, aren't you? Thirty, and don't know that kind of a woman when you see her! You've looked this girl pretty squarely in the face a number of times. You may or may not have seen stories there — but not that particular one. And, let



me tell you, that story always leaves its mark for the next man to read — always.”

Langdon looked at Hutchinson in silence. Then he hazarded:

“You’ve jolly well studied the thing out. What’s your game?”

“Mere idleness. I’m loafing up here while you are working. Dissimilarity always creates mystery. Men and women of the same ambitions understand each other. None of these people here would understand either of these women.”

“Well,” said Langdon, “I will ask her her name, point-blank, after dinner.”

“I hope I am there to hear her answer,” said Hutchinson. “It is not the way, on the whole, that I would suggest for you to throw away your crutches. Ask yourself her name, and see if you can not stand unaided.”

“How do you know so much?” said Langdon, thoroughly nettled.

“I don’t,” said Hutchinson. “But I have this advantage over you: The accident of ill-health at twenty-five, that it took me five years to cure, kept me pretty quiet, with little else to do than to watch what was going on around me. I know it is a habit with many people to think that there is little practical value in mere speculation. It may be, but there is this dif-

ficulty in leaving ourselves to act without preparatory thought—it makes us competent to handle only the things that have occurred to us before, or been experienced by those we know. There isn't a day, really, when we may not come upon entirely new conditions, and then for the lack of the habit of weighing motives and considering values, we can not meet the situation; or, worse still, we are guilty of hideous injustice.

“Look at these women here. This coming of another woman among them, who reserves her identity and does not intrude her personal matters, is new. They are, as a result, making themselves as ridiculous as you are, from sheer inability to speculate.”

Hutchinson nodded, and left the table as Mrs. Carson and Claudia passed him. He walked with them out of the dining-room to the porch.

“Will you excuse me a moment?” said Claudia. Then, to Mrs. Carson: “I will send the telegram to the doctor.”

She went back into the office.

“You are not looking well, madam,” said Hutchinson, with a stately courtesy that seemed to fit his tall figure quite perfectly. “Was the saddle riding perhaps a little too vigorous?”

“I did come home tired,” Nadine assented. “I am



not yet quite used to this altitude. It takes me about a week to really enjoy it."

"Would it not be better, then, to wait that week before exercising so violently? But, then, your automobiles arrived to-day. By to-morrow you will have an easier way of going about."

Nadine let her eyes rest on him thoughtfully.

"How do you happen to know either about the automobiles — or their arrival?" she asked.

"I am one of the assistant freight agents of the railroad," said Hutchinson. "This afternoon, also, I happened on another curious bit of information. That is really why I am sitting here boldly advising you about what you doubtless know more about than I. I was arranging in the village, at the livery-stable, for a horse for myself when a woman entered. There is but one manager, and I stopped while he attended to her inquiries. She wanted a horse and runabout for a few days, to keep at the Carson stables.

"Everybody in the village, of course, knows Carson's deserted condition, and the liveryman naturally made inquiries. She said she was a relative of the lodge keeper, and had been engaged to superintend the usual summer cleaning at Carson, but that the trip from the lodge to the house was too far, and she must have a horse. I do not know what arrangements she

concluded. Quite naturally, however, I connected them with you, madam."

"Ah!" said Nadine. "I should not have called such acute ratiocination 'quite' natural."

Hutchinson laughed softly.

"You score," he said. Then quietly: "On my return, I found Miss Claudia on the porch, waiting for you to come back from your ride, and I narrated the incident. For some reason, she took it to heart."

"That is probably the reason she was so anxious to telegraph some — some of my friends to join me," Nadine mused.

"Was there anything in the incident that would surprise you? It seems natural enough."

"It would — only I know nothing about it. It may be natural enough, however. The care of Carson has not been under my personal supervision —" She paused, realizing that she had by the phrase admitted her identity. "But, then, you knew, did you not?" She smiled at Hutchinson.

"Yes, I knew, Mrs. Carson."

"And Claudia need not have been concerned about your ignorance."

Hutchinson smiled back at her again.

"Was she concerned?" he asked.

"Ah!" said Nadine softly. "My wits are wool-gathering, with all these tales of Carson and strange



women. I should have reflected that Claudia's concerns are of more importance to me than to newer friends, who haunt hotel piazzas with uncanny perception."

She had created his opportunity for him and Hutchinson took instant advantage of it.

"They are of grave importance to me, Mrs. Carson. I hope, even after you leave here, you will permit me to continue my acquaintance with yourself — and, through it — with Miss Claudia."

He rose as Claudia came down the piazza.

"Surely," said Nadine. "There are few women I know whom I like as well as Claudia; none whom I respect more."

Hutchinson, watching Claudia, made no answer.

Nadine rose as Claudia joined them.

"Did I not hear Mrs. Schultz invite you to the german to-night, Claudia?" she asked.

"I have never been to a german in my life," said Claudia. It was with difficulty that she eliminated the "Mrs. Carson" with which she was used to ending her replies.

"She ought all the more to go, ought she not, Mr. Hutchinson?"

"I think so," he said. "Will you go with me, Miss Claudia?"

Claudia hesitated, with extreme embarrassment,

"I hope you will go, Clauda," said Mrs. Carson. "You will find it fun, and nobody ought to miss real fun. I shall spend the evening writing to Judge Wallace some very necessary instructions that I put off writing in order to ride to Carson this afternoon, but that can not be put off any longer. He does not even know where I am."

"But — a german!"

Clauda looked down at her white dress.

"You dance, Clauda. I saw you waltz once. A german is easy; you merely watch and imitate. Who leads?"

"Langdon is leading with Miss Schultz," said Hutchinson. "They are well matched."

"Persuade her to go, Mr. Hutchinson," said Nadine, turning to the door. "Good night," she smiled over her shoulder.

"You will go?" said Hutchinson to Clauda.

"I — you know — the situation —" Clauda paused, then took the plunge. "I am her maid," she said in low tones.

Hutchinson looked at her flushed face and downcast eyes.

"But Mrs. Carson herself wishes you to go," he said.

She stood absolutely still a moment. Then she

looked up at him, her clear dark eyes searching his face.

"You knew?" she said simply.

"Almost from the first," said Hutchinson.

"And — and — you do not mind?"

He took hold of the back of the chair in which Mrs. Carson had been sitting.

"Yes," he said, "I mind. I like it very much!"

There was silence between them for a brief and vital moment. Then Hutchinson spoke again slowly: "There are other things I have also known almost from the first — since that first day I saw you arrive, handling all the affairs of your arrival so quietly and competently; moving among those other women with dignity; companioning, with tact, in what was perhaps a new situation for you, a woman — like Mrs. Carson. And some others I have found out in our long talks together, and in our quiet companionship. I hope you are not going to let this acquaintance lapse when you return to town, Miss Claudia. You know I, too, live in New York."

Claudia looked out over the lake.

"Do you realize," she said, "that I have had only a country-school education, that I am just a plain farmer's daughter, that I went into this work because, after my father's death, I found I had no other way of

making a living, no special education; just nimble fingers and a sixth sense that tells me when I am in the way? I — I am not your sort, Mr. Hutchinson."

He leaned toward her, smiling at her softly.

"Did you know," he said, "that I had only five years of schooling in all my life, and from a little red school-house that I used to leave to drive the cows home for mother to milk?" He paused a moment. "As for your work," he continued, "I realize all these things about your work that have helped make you valuable. I told you I liked it."

"But your other friends?" said the girl.

"Oh, I haven't so many — I have been too busy. This is America, Miss Claudia; you have been living in a household where the world likes to go, calling itself the very cream of the social layer. You must have watched them, and you must have been in a position to hear the real truth about them. These things surely must mean little to you. You are very much my sort."

The girl shook her head.

"From what I hear," said Hutchinson gently, "even Mrs. Carson, who may choose her friends where she likes, picks them out for no other reason than their worth and their congeniality. I assure you I am asking no idle thing of you as the result of mere courtesy. I really want your friendship."

She made no answer, but she looked up at him sud-



denly, and held out her hand. His own closed over it, and he smiled.

Inside, Nadine went slowly up-stairs to the suite of rooms she occupied with Claudia and sat down at her desk to write to Judge Wallace. Before her lay a few unopened letters forwarded by Rawlins. She opened them languidly, scanned them briefly and put them aside, until she reached the last one, written on heavy gray paper in an unfamiliar hand.

She turned to the signature and read, sprawled across the page, James Higginham. Her mouth narrowed as she turned back to the first page of the letter.

“My Dear Lady:

By dint of the utmost patience and some bribery, I have learned that you are in the Adirondacks. As I followed you somewhat hastily from Boston after the night I had seen you there with our friend the rector—who even at Belle Terre caused me concern,—I was sorely disappointed over missing you in New York.

I leave to-night for Lake Placid Club and I write this in the hope that it will be forwarded to you, and that you will let me come to see you wherever you may be hiding in the Adirondacks. I must also confess to a small hope that, after being in Boston with his Reverence, you may relish a change of diet.

I shall be glad to put myself at your disposal even to the point of keeping silent over what I have seen

and what I can guess — especially since it would hurt, not only you, but do very real harm to a clergyman whose appointment to a bishopric is, I understand, pending and not yet ratified.

Yours appreciatively,

JAMES HIGGINHAM."

Nadine stared at the letter until its veiled threat rose up before her, an equal terror with her husband's face that had haunted her all afternoon. Then she tore the letter up and sat staring into the gray future before her.

Her project of converting Carson into a convalescent hospital had seemed a pleasant task since Carleton Thorne had insisted that his brother would like to join her in arranging for it. Almost subconsciously her planning had centered around Wrexford Thorne and now before her lay the ugly confirmation of her own fears. She could not work with a man so conspicuous, so bound to consider the comment of others, without harming him.

"And I hoped to keep Wrexford Thorne in my life!" she murmured. "I needed him so. Yet if I consider only my own needs, this is the thing that will result, this unspeakable defamation."

She let her head fall into her hands and sat stooped over her desk for a long time. The music from the

dancing came faintly through the room. After a while, Nadine raised her head and took up her pen.

"I will write to Judge Wallace," she said. "He has proved that he knows how to handle blackmail."

About the time Mrs. Carson finished writing to Judge Wallace, that gentleman was being hurriedly driven to the parish house of Wrexford Thorne's church, where the rector lived, and where, the judge had been told, Doctor Carleton Thorne had gone.

The doctor had taken Clauda's despatch to his brother, to ask the rector if he also could not get away for a few days at Saranac. He found his brother reluctant.

"You don't want to go up with me, Rex, and help put this thing through with Mrs. Carson?"

"I can not see, Carl, where I could be of the least use. You, of course, are different; you know what will be needed, you know about physicians, and nurses, and the expenses probably attached to such an undertaking."

"But this has been a thing you have wanted a long time, Rex. It is only decent that you should show an interest in it."

The rector settled his great shoulders back into his desk chair, and stared at the row of books beside him.

"I can do that," he said, "without going up there, where I am not needed."

"Then you really do not want to go?"

The rector looked away from the books at his brother.

"Trust you to hit the crux of the matter, Carl," he said gravely.

And then Judge Wallace knocked and entered.

"I followed you here," he said to his son-in-law. "I have news of Colin Carson."

Wrexford Thorne rose to find the judge a chair.

"You recall," said the judge, "that I believed it was Harding, the trustee Mrs. Carson discharged, who was behind Carson's escape? He had arranged a big blackmailing scheme with this woman who went with Carson. In our efforts to find them, I have had Harding watched pretty closely. To-day he sent the woman a telegram at Saranac. I had no idea they could get so far without discovery. I am sending men to Saranac to-morrow with Rawlins, Mrs. Carson's butler, who knows Carson. I would go myself, but it may be merely a false alarm, and I may need to be here, where they can reach me any moment."

The doctor looked at his brother. "But Mrs. Carson herself," he said, "is only three miles out of Saranac!"

The judge stared at him.



"I knew she had gone to the Adirondacks," he said, "but I did not know she was anywhere near Saranac."

"She has gone to look over the Saranac estate," said Carleton Thorne, "to see if it can be converted into a convalescent hospital for tuberculous patients."

"The Saranac estate," said Wrexford Thorne suddenly, "would be the very place a man like Harding would send a paranoëac, whose lucid intervals could not be counted on, especially if he had a woman with him. It would be secluded, and a place that would not be strange to Mr. Carson himself. The accident of Mrs. Carson's going there would probably not occur to either of them."

"I recall," said Judge Wallace, "that the lodge keeper, who takes care of the estate, is an appointee of Harding's."

"I had a despatch from Claudia to-night, saying that Mrs. Carson's first ride through the grounds of Carson had made her ill, and asking when 't would be convenient for me to come."

Wrexford Thorne spoke hurriedly. "I was with Mrs. Carson the time her husband was moved from one sanatorium to another. You recall the occasion, Carl. Harding was trying to get Mr. Carson out even then. At the beginning of the journey, Mr. Carson was apparently as sane as either of us. He even chose

careful words in speaking. He thought he was being taken home. When he found himself in another sanatorium, he went to pieces. I have never seen anything like it. He abused his wife with every vile word; he threatened to kill her if he ever got out. If this creature is at Carson, and Mrs. Carson comes on him suddenly — When are you going up, Carl?”

“I can not go until late to-morrow. I operate to-morrow morning. We had better wire Mrs. Carson.”

“What can you wire her?” said the judge. “If you tell her to keep away from Carson, without giving a reason, she may not do so. If you tell her her husband is there, it may not prove true. And if he is there, it is quite possible that she may meet him on any road outside of Carson itself.”

Wrexford Thorne opened a desk drawer for a railroad time-table.

“I am going up to-night,” he said, “if I can catch the train. I will arrive but a little later than a wire would be delivered to-morrow morning.”

He turned over the leaves of the time-table.

“This man is dangerous, and his hatred of his wife is the hatred of a lunatic.” He looked his brother in the face. “As you said, Carl, it is only decent for me to show an interest in this project of a home for char-

ity tuberculous patients, that I have been trying to arrange for years."

"Surely!" said Carleton Thorne. "I will join you in a day or two, with my wife, unless you need me earlier, in which case you can wire me."

CHAPTER XIX

"Hist, but a word, fair and soft!
Forth and be judged, Master Hugnes!"

NADINE came down the piazza steps the next morning with Claudia to examine the two automobiles that had just been driven out from the village. There was a small roadster for her own driving and a larger touring car. From the piazza, Langdon watched her.

"Leave the roadster here," Nadine directed. "I am going to use it this morning. Is it in perfect running order?"

She came back to the piazza thoughtfully. All night she had been haunted by what she had begun to call her obsession — the vision of Colin Carson's eyes peering at her from the foliage. And because of her mounting fear and distaste, she had determined to waste no more time over the business that had brought her to Saranac, but to go over the house to-day.

Claudia had begged to go with her and had been denied. Unpleasant as it was to Nadine to face the task alone, she believed it would be worse to be accom-

panied. There were too many memories about the place for her to wish to return to it watched by any other eyes.

As she came back on the piazza, Langdon came forward to meet her.

"Are you motoring to-day?" he asked.

"All morning, I think," she answered.

"Tell me," he said, "will the road we took to Carson yesterday be the nearest one to the house, if we take the path to the left where it divides?"

"To the house?" echoed Mrs. Carson.

"Yes. I am going to ride with Miss Schultz this morning. She has secured a horse, and she wants to see Carson, because of Mrs. Carson. She knows a lot about her, and is interested in the place. I thought I would take her to the house."

"You can not do so this morning," said Nadine.

Almost unconsciously her voice took on the tone of annoyance of one whose privacy is unwarrantably intruded on.

Langdon flushed angrily.

"I can not do so this morning!" he exclaimed.

"Why, I have arranged it! Miss Schultz wishes to see the house."

"Strangers are not admitted without a permit," said Nadine, with sudden recollection of herself.

"But I have a permit."



"Miss Schultz has not."

"That will not matter," said Langdon.

"Your work — have you time to take a whole morning from it? Are you not here at Mrs. Carson's expense?"

Langdon, by this time, was thoroughly angry.

"Really!" he said. "I must be the judge of that. Pardon my having asked for information. We will go around by the regular road."

"I am sorry to interdict you," said Nadine. "You may go to-morrow, or any other day. This morning you may not go. I am going myself, and I shall want the place to myself."

"Are you joking?" said Langdon.

"No. I am really going."

"Well, what has that to do with Miss Schultz and me?"

Sudden impatience overtook Nadine.

"I said I wished to be alone — and you — you have your work."

"I can scarcely tell if you are in earnest. Really, you know, the place does not belong to you, does it? Even if you were once employed there!"

"No, perhaps not; nevertheless, for all practical purposes, it is mine. I am Mrs. Colin Carson."

Langdon looked at her in appalled silence. Nadine turned away, and entered the house for her motor coat

and hat. Langdon stared after her, and in a vocabulary moderately expressive, he found no word that would suffice.

It was fully two hours later that Hutchinson, unfolding his New York paper, came out on the veranda for a smoke, and found himself surrounded by a group of women that included an irate Mrs. Schultz and a curious daughter.

"Mr. Hutchinson," said Mrs. Schultz, "you will just have to tell us what you know about these matters. You know Miss Murray better than the rest of us."

"But," rebelled Hutchinson, "I know nothing about any matters."

"Where have your eyes been all this exciting morning, then?"

Hutchinson declined to commit himself.

"Why, look out there at the garage!"

Hutchinson looked languidly; then with swift interest. For Claudia stood in earnest conversation with a tall and very distinguished-looking man, who was superintending a hurried pouring of gasoline into the tank of the touring car.

"It is very curious," said Mrs. Schultz. "This morning my daughter was going to ride to Carson with Mr. Langdon. She had ordered her horse, and suddenly Mr. Langdon sent her word that he was very

sorry he could not go; that he had received orders from Mrs. Carson, who was employing him, to do some special work that morning, and that he found out nobody would be admitted to Carson without Mrs. Carson's permission. We came out on the porch about a quarter of an hour later, just as this girl with Miss Murray went down the steps to a small motor she afterward drove herself. Just before she started, she called Miss Murray to her, took out a small pad from her pocket, and wrote several lines on it. What was it she said then, Josephine?"

Miss Schultz took up the tale.

"She said: 'Clauda, they might not let even you through the gates if, for any reason, you wanted to send after me, so take this.' Then she went off, after telling Miss Murray again she could not go with her. Mama, I always said you had it wrong, and that it was not the young girl that was the companion."

Hutchinson smoked silently.

"Then," said Mrs. Schultz, "Mr. Langdon came out to ride to Carson, alone. We naturally took that opportunity to ask for explanations. He certainly did not seem to have any. He said he could get us a permit for any other time but to-day. Then I spoke of this mysterious girl — not unkindly —"

"Mama, you said all sorts of things about her."

"Well, what if I did? They are probably all true."



And Mr. Langdon said: 'You are making a mistake. She may be an adventuress, but she has ten or fifteen million dollars behind it, and so she probably won't mind being called one.' "

Hutchinson took out his cigar, and chuckled. Mrs. Schultz regarded him with distaste.

"Can you explain this, Mr. Hutchinson?" Mrs. Schultz insisted.

"I can not," Hutchinson replied promptly. But he turned to look at Claudia and the strange man.

"And that man, too!" Mrs. Schultz expounded. "He came on the morning train, the newspaper train, that hardly anybody comes on. The clerk told us. It is the Reverend Wrexford Thorne — the man they say is to be the next bishop of Massachusetts. He came about a half-hour after the young girl went off in her automobile, and he asked for Miss Murray at once. Josephine heard him. It looks very queer to me. The whole hotel is excited about it."

"The hotel needs a tonic," said Hutchinson.

"One doesn't get the Reverend Wrexford Thorne every day," said Miss Schultz. "He is the handsomest man, for a rector, that I have ever seen. I call him simply stunning. What can he want with Miss Murray?"

Hutchinson was asking himself the same question. Then Claudia suddenly saw him on the porch. Even

at the distance he was from her, Hutchinson saw her sudden change of expression. She said a few words to the man beside her, and then beckoned to Hutchinson.

Mrs. Schultz beheld him cover the space between the porch and the garage with the utmost speed.

"He does know something," she said.

"Mama," said Josephine; "mama, it has just occurred to me! You do not suppose — oh, you do not suppose this girl could be Mrs. Carson herself?"

Mrs. Schultz looked blankly at her daughter, while into her face came a slow tide of unaccustomed crimson.

"Surely — surely — it could not be!"

"It explains a good many things."

"If — if — it is — what a chance we have missed!"

"And how we have snubbed her — oh, and last night's dance, mama! We didn't invite her, because we thought she was a maid! Mrs. Colin Carson here!"

"I wonder what we can do about it?" said Mrs. Schultz mournfully.

They turned to watch the garage. The automobile was backing out into the road. Mr. Thorne himself was at the wheel. Claudia and Mr. Hutchinson sat in the back.

CHAPTER XVIII

"Because his God decreed one clot of blood
Should swerve a hair's-breadth from the pulse's path
And chafe his brain —"

THE gate was unlocked and the lodge empty when Nadine reached it. She took note of it, as a carelessness that must be corrected. She closed the gate and reëntered her motor, driving it slowly over the roads she had not seen for so many years.

As she turned into the drive that, with another half-mile, would bring her to the house, she saw coming toward her a woman who, even at a distance, seemed conspicuously handsome. Nadine slowed up, examining her. She was tall, and she walked well. Across her left cheek lay a long scar that gave her the look of a woman who had a story.

Nadine brought her machine to a stop. This was doubtless the woman of whom Langdon and Mr. Hutchinson had spoken; yet she did not look like a caretaker, unless she was one of the many "cures" who work at anything.

"Have you come from the house?" said Nadine.

The woman looked at her curiously a moment before she answered.

"Yes. Why?"

"Is it open?"

"No, it is locked. You can not go in."

Nadine merely nodded.

"Are you the woman who is cleaning it?"

The woman hesitated again. Then she said: "Why do you ask?"

"I wanted to know. I want to know its condition."

The woman made no answer, studying Nadine curiously.

Nadine spoke shortly.

"Are you employed here?"

"You might call it that."

"Who employs you?"

The woman gave her a suspicious look.

"What are you doing here?" she countered. "They do not allow visitors. You can not go into the house."

"Will you answer my question?" said Nadine.

"No, I will not!" said the woman. "And I think you had better turn around and go back. Strangers are not permitted to enter."

"I am permitted," said Nadine.

She realized that she must either excuse her abrupt inquiries by an announcement of who she was, and her


right to inquire, or give them up and go on. She chose the latter course. With a little nod, she threw the clutch of her machine and sped on.

The woman stood in the road, looking after her with apprehensive eyes. There was only one woman in the world who had permission to enter the house she had recently left; only one woman who would probably feel herself at liberty to accost anybody she saw coming from the house in this manner. But she knew, from very late information, that Mrs. Carson was nowhere near Saranac. She found herself wishing that she had taken advantage of many opportunities in which she might have seen Mrs. Carson. Then she reassured herself. This was probably just an impertinent and somewhat venturesome hotel guest.

Carson was the one place that its owner's wife was said never to come near. For years it had been utterly deserted and neglected. The woman turned and went on her way to meet the absent lodge keeper.

Nadine brought her machine to a crawling pace as she approached the house. Massive and gray, it rose from the hill on which it stood, indescribably desolate in its desertion.

The shutters were closed everywhere, save in one corner of the second story. Nadine remembered, with a pang, that these rooms had been her own during the month she had spent in the house. No sign of life was



visible, but the road to the house was well cared for, the veranda was newly swept. The place had an air of being watched over. It was in good repair.

Nadine saw that the morning sun flooded the veranda and the front of the house, and considered its benefits to her probable patients. Yet she could not bring herself to control the shuddering distaste the house brought her. She wished she might tear it down and rebuild. Then she reproached herself anew. This was sheer sentimentality, and it appeared to be growing on her.

She brought her little car to a stop, and got out, moving slowly up the steps to the pillared porch. As she did so, she fancied she heard a window sash flung up. She paused.

"I should have brought Claudia with me," she said nervously.

She stood silent, listening, but there was no other sound.

When one stands alone before a deserted house that holds the ghosts of other days, one's imagination plays odd tricks. Nadine found herself listening for fancied footfalls. She had the feeling of being watched from behind those closed shutters. She turned from them a moment, recalling how she had first stood on this porch, looking out over the pine-clad hills to the dim blue mountains, drinking in its beauty, planning how



she could fill the place with others who would enjoy it with her.

She remembered how, a little later, she had watched her husband ride up the drive on a horse whose mettlesome quality rebelled against the spur that was being driven remorselessly into its flank. Even as she had found herself concerned over the way the horse was being handled, its master had flung himself off at the veranda steps, and, holding the rein, he had given the horse so merciless a beating that she had cried out against it. She had grasped her husband's arm and called his name, but he had not even heard her. Yet her hand on his arm had loosened his hold on the rein, and the plunging horse had broken loose.

Colin Carson had turned on her furiously, and she had seen for the first time the look of unbridled rage she came afterward to know so well. She had thought he was going to strike her, but she had not flinched, staring steadily at him, as his abusive words were flung at her. Yet when the torrent of abuse stopped, and, seizing her, he rained sudden kisses on her face, she fled with terror, followed by his strange laughter.

She could still see herself, a mere girl not quite twenty, absolutely unprotected in this lonely place that held only a group of terrorized servants, hiding from the man who had married her, sobbing out her fear and

her loneliness among the pines and the hills that closed her away from the world.

"Shall I never be rid of these poisonous memories?" she murmured. "Is the whole world to turn a charnel-house because of one man's madness?"

Then there came to her the vision of another face that had begun to measure for her the meaning of all of her past pain. The brow broad with a clear pallor of skin; gray-green eyes set in dark rims that deepened their direct gaze.

She went back over their first encounters, when there had seemed no need of all those usual delicate adjustments of the masculine mind to the feminine, comprehension of each other came so easily to them. She recalled her slow spiritual drifting toward him in the time that followed their weeks at the Jossur farm; her turning away from a hundred other interests to work with him. There had been days when, with her hands so full of wealth of these hours, she could hold no more. If this could have but endured; if love had not followed with its unceasing need of seeing him, of hearing him, of being near him, with the pain of its restraint that must keep her always aloof, how they might have filled the days with more happiness than is usually given to men and women for their daily need. And here Nadine's thoughts paused before a new question.

Had not this thing that she called friendship always been love? The miracle of felicity that occurred again and again with each new congeniality that they discovered, the sentient and higher substance that each mind struck from the other, had been there from the first, and was surely more than mere friendliness. She wondered if she could have known the worth of love that understood and was kind, had she not first endured the life that this desolate house where she now stood symbolized for her. Nor must she forget that it was this life that had earned for her the power of these hoarded millions to use for good.

She turned to the door, and holding the keys a moment in a last reluctant hesitation, she finally plunged the key into the lock and turned it.

The hallway met her dark and chill. She paused and looked about her. Above the console at one side, a great mirror looked down on her, framing her slender blue figure with a mysterious background of darkened walls. On the console lay several packages that seemed to have been but recently tied in paper, for no dust lay on them. Nadine examined them. They were grocery supplies.

"Some things for the dinners of those working in the house," she said to herself.

But the house gave small sign of having been recently opened, save for marks in the dust on the hard-

wood floor, of footsteps that led up the stairway to the second floor.

Nadine went into the drawing-room, with its shrouded furniture and shuttered gloom. Vague noises fell on the silence, the noises that hover about an empty house — creaking boards — a door in the distance that seemed to slam as with some sudden gust of wind.

Nadine returned to the hall, and went slowly through the adjoining rooms, noting where they could be changed to serve her purpose. This room would do for a consulting room. The dining-room needed no changes. The kitchen seemed in good condition. It looked as if it had been lately used.

The shadow of the house lay heavy on her spirit. She felt she could never again take pleasure in it, never enter it without depression. She came back to the stairway, and paused, considering once more if it would be a reckless waste of money if she should tear the place down and rebuild it. With a sigh she concluded that it would. The house was perfectly adapted for the use to which she wished to put it, but how she disliked it!

It took her several minutes to summon enough courage to mount the stairway. She went through the rooms on the second floor with more minute care than those below, leaving the suite in the western wing, that

had been her own, until the last. The up-stairs of the house had evidently been recently cleaned. It could be put into immediate use, with scarcely any refurnishing.

At the entrance of the small hall that led to her own rooms was a spiral stairway that climbed to a tower from which the view was unsurpassed. This had escaped the cleaning-up process, for in its accumulated dust it bore the mark of footsteps and a hand on the banister. Nadine looked at it as she hesitated before the closed door of the rooms that were hardest of all to enter.

With what high ideals of marriage she had entered this new life; ideals won from no training ever given her in the household where she had spent her narrowed girlhood, but wrung from some heritage of womanhood and maternity long forgotten! How young she had been, how hopeful, how full of faith!

She turned the handle of the door, and entered. For a moment she could scarcely credit her senses. A faint fragrance reached her first, the fragrance of some powerful sachet unfamiliar to her. The room was shaded and quiet, but very surely it was a room in actual use. On the dressing-table were a woman's toilet requisites. Across the couch in the window was flung a silken negligée. A pair of woman's slippers lay on the floor.

Nadine's first thought was that the woman who had been cleaning probably stayed there at night. It was

a long way back to the village. But the toilet appointments were of ivory, and the negligée that of a woman of leisure.

Nadine flung open the window, looked about her a moment, and then, stabbed by the sudden intimate familiarity of the room, she turned to the doorway of the bedroom beyond.

With her hand on the door-knob, she paused. Either her imagination was once more playing her curious tricks, or she had distinctly heard a movement in the room beyond. It was as if, with the noise of the opening window, some one had awakened and sat up suddenly in bed. Then, as she held the knob, hesitating, it turned in her grasp, and the door was flung suddenly open.

Nadine gave a long low cry. For she had come into the arms of a powerful man,—a man with malignant eyes, who held her by the arms and looked at her first with a laugh of excited pleasure, then more quietly as she stood turned to stone, facing him silently; then, with the laughter quite gone, and rage deepening and lightening the shifting gaze, and with lips drawn back in a snarl that made the face one of some wild beast of prey.

“So! It is you!” he said. “You hunting me down again! You, who have come here, where I have hidden myself to rest and get well, to hound me back

to your cursed captivity, to put me under lock and key, to have me followed, and watched, and guarded!"

He tightened his hold on her until her arms ached.

"I saw you the other day," he went on. "I saw you riding with one of your lovers, one of the men my money brings about you, one of the men your freedom from me gives you chance to exploit. I came near killing you then, nearer than I have come any of the dozen times I have meant to kill you. I would have done it, had I thought you were planning to come here. How could you get in this house? How dare you come into it?"

He shook her horribly.

"This is my house," he said. "Do you hear? This is my house."

Nadine's voice died. With utter helplessness, she stared at the snarling face.

He laughed again. "I thought you were Marta come back," he said. "Marta, who ought to be in your shoes! Marta, who really cares about me, who has cared all these years you were keeping me locked up. It was Marta I should have married, not you. You always hated me! Almost as much as I hated you when I got tired of you!" He looked at her more closely. "I haven't had much chance to be tired of you lately, have I? I am going to kiss you. I am going to kiss you before I kill you. I am going to kiss

you until I'm tired of you again, and then I'm going to kill you."

He bent his leering face down on hers, holding her to him, laughing with shrill glee at her struggling; holding her helplessly in his grip.

"Colin," she whispered. "Colin, let me go!"

"Let you go!" He still laughed. "I'll never let you go! A fine wife you make a man! I'll keep you here to see the difference between you and Marta. I'll keep you here, locked in, as you have kept me; tied up, as you have kept me; tied tight, while you look on at Marta, as I looked at you riding the other day. Let you go? You'll never get away from here, my lady."

For a moment, contemplating this project, the man's grasp relaxed. And in the moment Nadine sprang loose, and flung the door to between them. Almost she gained the other door into the hall, where safety might lie. Her hand was on the knob when the man reached her. His long arms shot out, grasping her throat and waist. His voice rose to a wilder note of triumph.

"Oh, you will, will you? Not yet — not yet! This is not quite the end of you. You have too long stood in my way. With you gone, there is nobody to hunt me into a hospital. With you gone, I am free — keep still!" For Nadine had made one more desperate struggle, putting forth all her strength.

Pitted against the maniacal impulse of the man, her struggling was absolutely ineffectual. He lifted her from her feet and carried her to the bedroom. Holding her wrists with one hand, he tore the covers from the bed with the other. Nadine still struggled. He dropped his covers a moment, and struck her savagely across the head, half stunning her. Then, still holding her, he flung a sheet under one foot, and, with his free hand, he tore it lengthwise, and then into narrower strips. He tied her hands behind her, and held her against the bars of the bed, where he stopped to look at her. Nadine shuddered at the look.

"No," he snarled, "no, I do not want you."

He tore the other sheet into strips, and bound her to the bed, feet and shoulders, waist and neck.

"If you scream," he said, "I'll tie your mouth up."

In the old days she had been used to quiet him, looking at him steadily. She fixed her eyes on him now, but she could not keep them there.

"Colin!" she said. "You can not really mean to hurt me. You must believe that you were kept in a sanatorium for your own good, not mine. I had no wish to make you unhappy, only to keep you from harm."

A hoarse protest stopped her.

"No, no! I do not mean really to hurt you. I mean just to kill you, that's all; just to kill you, just

to kill you! And not all at once, either; but little by little, as you have killed me; a little here and a little there."

He backed away from her to the door, and went out. She heard him go down-stairs and shut and lock the hall door. She tried her bonds; they yielded not an inch. Then she tried the use of her voice. Call on call sped forth into the silent air. Then she heard him tearing the paper from the bundles in the hall and bounding up the stairs.

He stood in the doorway looking at her a moment, gnawing at the knuckles of his hand until the raw places on it bled afresh, and his teeth, as his upper lip drew back over them, were flecked with blood.

"Nobody will hear you," he said. "There is nobody but Marta, and she will not be back for an hour. Scream! I like it. Scream!"

Nadine watched him with every fiber strung to the breaking point.

"What! What! No more screams? We'll see — we'll see! You will scream yet. See, look through that door. I am going to set fire to all the curtains there. The room will burn — first the paper on the wall, then the whole room! I did it once. It was beautiful! The blaze runs in little rivulets over the paper. It will get down to the floor, and there will be smoke that will choke you, and yet you will be alive.

And the flames will come nearer and nearer while you watch them, and you will be still alive. And they will scorch your feet and burn them, and your hands, and clothes, and body. If the rags holding you burn, you will be afire by then, and it will not matter, and the whole room will be afire, and you will not be able to get out. And your long hair will burn! And your eyes! And you will still be alive, burning all over. And I shall be up in the tower, looking down on you. I shall watch you burn."

He took from the table a box of matches.

"This is better than just to choke your breath out of you. This is better than to starve you. This will be good to watch."

He passed through the door into the other room. She heard him pause, and begin to laugh again. She saw him hold blazing papers for a moment until a faint glow wavered over the curtains in the front windows of the room.

For a few minutes the room seemed to whirl about Nadine; then the acrid smell of smoke stung her into keener consciousness, in which she heard swift light footsteps rushing down the hall, the bang of a door in the next room, and a sharp voice calling:

"Collie, Collie, what are you doing?"

The laughter in the next room stopped.

"I am going to burn her. I am sick of her taking

your place, Marta. I am going to get her out of your way, and out of my own. It is she who keeps me locked up. It is she we have been hiding from; this will fix it, and nobody will know we have done it. Let those curtains alone. I tell you, you needn't be afraid. There will be nothing here but a burnt house in a few minutes. You'll burn yourself. Let those things alone; I tell you I am doing it for you. It's not you I want to burn. God, look at you!"

Nadine heard the low cry of a woman's voice; the sound of tearing curtains and a brief struggle of some kind. Then the woman's voice said: "Throw the rug on them! You can't do a thing like this! If this house burns, where will you go? Tramp on it! Beat it out! I don't need to have anybody put out of my way. Do as I say!"

Colin Carson's voice broke in, rising to a shriller note of uncontrol.

"Marta, you are burning! The front of your dress is afire! Run!"

He dashed into the bedroom, past Nadine, toward the bath-room, dragging the woman after him. The sleeve of her gown was flaming toward her face. Even in that mad moment of panic, Nadine saw that it was the face of the woman she had met on her way to the house; a face whose beauty was marked by a long scar. Nadine heard the water running and a low moan of

pain from the woman. Colin Carson's voice shrilled into new terror.

"Marta, Marta, are you hurt? God, if you are hurt, I will kill her now. See what I will do to her!"

He dragged the woman to the door, and Nadine saw that under the water that dripped from her face and shoulders the flame had burnt her hair and seemed to have touched her neck and lips. Nadine shuddered. This was the thing Colin Carson had intended for her.

"Let me go," said the woman faintly. "You fool! If you had not bent my head over to put it under that water faucet—" She could scarcely speak for pain.

Colin Carson stared at her, unable to comprehend the measure of her disaster.

"I did it for you," he repeated. "I wanted to get rid of her for you. I will yet."

But he seemed unable to take his eyes away from Marta, who had fallen back on the dismantled bed with another low cry.

"Good God, I might have known enough to keep away from you," she moaned. As she spoke, the sound of an automobile horn coming nearer each moment fell on the air. Small ribbons of smoke from the other room began to drift through the door. Marta's eyes, bright with pain, followed the smoke a moment and then fell on Nadine. She lifted herself and leaned toward her.

"Get yourself loose!" she said. "I think I must have breathed in some of that flame. I can not catch my breath, and nobody knows what this fool will do. You had no business to come —" And her voice died away in quick gasps.

"Marta, shall I get you more water?" said Colin Carson, apparently utterly forgetful of everything but the huddled figure on the bed.

"Don't come near me! Untie her!"

The smoke in the room was thickening. Again the sound of the automobile horn reached them.

"Untie her!" said Colin Carson. "I'll show you what I'll do to her!"

He sprang off the bed where he had been kneeling beside Marta.

"Listen!" said Marta.

CHAPTER XIX

"Which built his house upon the sand."

"**T**HE road to the right, Mr. Thorne?" said Hutchinson. "You can see the marks of Mrs. Carson's machine ahead of you. Somebody has gone by on a horse."

Wrexford Thorne said nothing. He had his own depression to contend with. Carson was not a place where he would have deliberately chosen to come. Yet, having seen the look that Colin Carson had given his wife and heard his threats when he found he was not to be released, on that ride he had taken with her now many months ago, there seemed no other way. He knew perfectly why Nadine had never cared to return to Carson. And he could guess at her reason for going there alone to-day. It did not make his necessity to follow her any easier.


As he drove the car through the wonderful woods and out again over low hills that gave a view of range on range of mountains, he saw none of the beauty about him. Only the loneliness reached him. He found himself marveling how any older woman could

send a young girl alone to a place like this with Colin Carson. Even six years ago this man's wild recklessness had been on every tongue. He could never have been a man whom any woman would wish to see married to a girl she cared for, even a little.

Over the soft hum of the motor there reached them the sound of galloping hoofs. Down a path that branched off the main road came Langdon, urging his horse. He waved at them, calling something. Thorne brought his machine to a standstill until Langdon reached them.

"Hutchinson!" said Langdon breathlessly. "This morning I found out that she was Mrs. Carson. She would not let me bring Miss Schultz to the house this morning because she said she was going there herself, and wished to be alone. But a big, old, deserted place like that is no place for a woman alone. I thought it over while I was working, and then I started toward the house, but I did not want Mrs. Carson to see me. She had said so emphatically that I was not to go there.

"It seemed to me — I am not sure — but it seemed to me when I came near I heard screams — some woman calling for help. But when I got there, there was no sound. Mrs. Carson's motor is in the driveway, but the door is locked. I called, and knocked, and rang. Then I heard your horn, and —"



"Get in!" said Wrexford Thorne. "Leave your horse here, and get in. Hurry!"

His face had whitened. His hand trembled on the wheel as he urged the car to its utmost speed.

"Hutchinson," he called over his shoulder, "lean forward, and keep the horn going."

"Look! Look! Look at that window!" said Hutchinson, as the house came in sight, set on the hill around which the driveway wound. "There! On the second floor! Underneath the tower!"

Smoke was pouring from the closed shutters of one window; and from the open window beyond it, a faint glow wavered.

The men flung themselves from the car.

"The windows," called Wrexford Thorne. "Break through them here."

He ran up the steps of the porch, flinging himself against the resisting shutters. But they had been built to keep out intruders from a house that was far from the help of others, and even under his savage onset they did not yield. He wrenched at the fastenings of the heavy door, searching desperately for some quicker way of entrance.

"You can't do it," called Langdon. "I tried every way to get in only a little while ago."

"The window is open on the second floor," said Thorne. "I am going up the roof of the porch.

Hutchinson, stand on the railing by the pillar, and let me have your shoulder. Then you two can try to pry these shutters open."

Clauda turned swiftly to the automobile, and tore from the rail the heavy lap-ropes. As Thorne reached the roof of the porch, Hutchinson flung him the robes. Never had either man been so glad of his great height.

"Throw them about you! Over your head! The place is burning!"

But as he faced the rooms whose windows overlooked the porch, Wrexford Thorne saw that the flames were in only one room, the one with the open window, to the right of him. From the closed windows to the left small ribbons of smoke were eddying, but he could see no flames.

Hutchinson called to him.

"We will get in from down here."

He was attacking the heavy shutters with the hammer from the tool chest of the small car. Its blows cut through wood and glass.

"Stay outside, Clauda," called Hutchinson. "Some one must be outside."

He rushed into the house with Langdon. Clauda shuddered, forcing her eyes to the window where Wrexford Thorne had gone in.

Inside Thorne waited an instant to get his breath.



The room was darkened by swirling eddies of smoke that prevented him from seeing clearly anything save an open door at the end of the room.

"Nadine! Nadine!" he called. She might be in the very room in which he stood.

As he paused to listen, the sound of a woman's voice reached him, broken by what seemed like hard efforts to catch her breath.

"Take this thing you call your husband. I will never go near him again. I make you a gift of him; and be sure he is mine to give. I married him long before he knew you; no sham marriage, but a real one — but I was a fool — to go back to him."

"Nadine!" Thorne called again, springing to the door; and then his eyes fell suddenly on the figure bound to the bars of the bed, with its head lying motionless on the foot-rail, and behind it Colin Carson. Then the vision of Nadine's bruised white face drove all other sight and thought from his brain, save that needful for her release.

From the hall below rose Hutchinson's voice.

"Thorne! Thorne! Where are you?"

The sound had a curious effect on Carson. He sprang past Nadine and Wrexford Thorne into the other room, and there was the sound of a key turning in the door.

And as Thorne tore at the knots and bands that were holding Nadine, he heard a low laugh, and Carson sprang on him.

"Let her be! Let her be! She is mine, and she has hurt Marta! I tell you, you shall not have her!"

Thorne's shoulders strained beneath the weight of the madman struggling with him. They swayed to and fro while about them the eddying smoke drifted with unheeded warning. Hutchinson's voice again rang out.

"Thorne! This door is locked! We are going back! We are coming up to the porch roof to help you!"

Thorne put forth his utmost strength, beating the madman back toward the outer room, and as they reached the door, Hutchinson and Langdon sprang through the window and caught Colin Carson by throat and shoulder and held him pinioned in the door. As Hutchinson came face to face with the man he held he gave a low exclamation, staring at him, as if he were unable to believe his eyes.

"You! After all these years! In God's name, how did you get here?"

Then his eyes passed beyond Carson to the figure on the bed, that at the sound of his voice had slowly raised itself.

"Marta!" said Hutchinson.



The woman with the burned hair, and the flame-seared mouth, stared for a moment at Hutchinson, whose hold on Colin Carson tightened.

"Tom!" she said. "You brought him to me this way. Now you can take him away." At the pain of her movements, she shot a malevolent look at Colin Carson. "Tie his hands," she said. "Here! With some of these things he used himself!"

She swept the two men the bands Wrexford Thorne was tearing from Nadine. Hutchinson used them with a grim pleasure.

"Keep still!" he muttered. "Or I'll tie your mouth up! Hold him, Langdon! Hold his knees until I get this knotted! There!"

Hutchinson pushed the now helpless figure into a chair.

"Get water from the bath-room!" gasped Marta. "Do you want us all to burn?"

The two men obeyed her, working swiftly to put out the flame.

Wrexford Thorne gathered Nadine into his arms, with eyes for nothing else but the white face with the livid mark of a blow across the forehead, and the small bruised hands with their swollen wrists.

Marta leaned on the bed, watching them, and as Nadine opened her eyes, they fell not on Wrexford Thorne but on Marta, and her mind took up the

thread of consciousness where it had been interrupted a few moments before.

"Are you — are you — his wife?" said Nadine. "Tell me the truth."

She did not seem to see the others: Langdon, his hold tightening on Colin Carson, as he made a sudden movement toward Marta; Wrexford Thorne at her side; Hutchinson pausing in the doorway.

Marta caught at her chest, drawing a long painful breath.

"I am his wife," she said. Her haggard face turned toward Hutchinson. "He will tell you so — Tom knows. He knows he made him marry me."

"I did not know it was this lunatic, Marta, that I made you marry." He turned to the others. "What she says is true. She is his wife. I made him marry her. I saw to it that it was legally done."

Nadine's voice came low and quivering. Once more she spoke to Marta.

"Why — did you not tell me before?"

Some new strength seemed to come to Marta. She spoke clearly.

"They bought me off. When he got ready to marry you, and I threatened him, he said if I proved this forced marriage, he would divorce me at once, and I'd have nothing. He said he'd use John Harding, as cause for divorce. But that if I kept still, he'd

give Harding and me all we wanted. I did try to tell you, only a few weeks ago; but I couldn't make it, and then John Harding took it out of my hands."

Nadine leaned toward her, brushing her loosened hair out of her eyes. "But Harding did nothing," she said. "He did not even tell the truth. He only tried to get money."

"They threatened him with the penitentiary," said Marta, "and he — Harding has been good to me — I — I couldn't do it — and he said —"

Her face whitened, save where the flame had touched her.

A sudden stillness fell on the room. Nadine's eyes left Marta and passed to the figure of Colin Carson, gazing vacantly at them, and muttering to himself.

"I'm glad I did it! I'm glad I did it!" said Carson. "It was a good plan. Nobody else could have thought it out! But she shouldn't have hurt Marta."

All the misery of years of pain seemed to lie in Nadine's face; all the horror of her useless bondage. She lifted her hand to the bruise throbbing across her forehead; and a little low cry broke from her. She turned away, and, turning, faced Wrexford Thorne.

"Nadine," said Thorne, "let me take you away."

"We shall all be burned if we do not get away at once," said Hutchinson.

For behind Hutchinson, as he stood in the doorway, there had risen, all unnoticed, a new glow, and now fresh puffs of smoke began to slip through the room.

He gave a backward look at the room behind him, and turned to Marta, who had sunk back on the bed once more.

"Come, let us get out," said Langdon. "This woman is sicker than any of you think. We need a doctor right away. Hutchinson, call Mrs. Carson's maid to help. We can put Carson and the woman in the big car—and drive to the hospital with them. Thorne can take—take—" Langdon hesitated and in a lower voice added—"Mrs. Carson and her maid in the small car back to the hotel."


Hutchinson gave the outer room another look. Little tongues of flame were darting over the wall-paper and, carried by the draft from the window, smoke, that threatened to burst into flame, was spreading to the outside and creeping toward the tower above the room.

"Yes," said Hutchinson. "Can you bring Carson, Langdon."

"I'll get him out, all right," said Langdon. "And look after him when I get him there."

Hutchinson nodded and lifted Marta in his arms, following Langdon, with wary eyes on Colin Carson.

Outside Marta's low moaning stopped them.



"Put me down," said Marta. "I can not breathe."

Wreathed smoke began to pour from the windows and tongues of flame began to curl up over the pine boards of the second story of the house.

"What shall we do?" said Hutchinson. "She ought to have a doctor at once."

"The hospital, on the outside of the village, is nearest," said Langdon.

Hutchinson moved slowly toward the automobile.

"Wait, wait a moment," gasped Marta. "I can not breathe. Put me down a moment, and let me rest. Then I will go."

She lay still for some moments; there was no sound save the sharp crackle of fanned flames. The pine boards at the corner of the upper story of the house were shriveling and swaying, and as they waited, the flames burst into a brighter glare.

Colin Carson, his hands still bound, and guarded by Langdon, leaned far forward, watching the wall of flame creep up to the tower of the house. Then peal on peal of laughter echoed above the sound of the crackling wood that was fast becoming a roar.

Nadine trembled, and Wrexford Thorne moved closer to her.

Marta turned her head on Hutchinson's arm.

"He did it all — the beast! The mad beast!" she whispered.

There was a swift outburst of orange smoke, a sullen roar, a crash, and a blinding sheet of flame.

"Let us get away," said Hutchinson, his eyes suddenly meeting Clauda's for a moment. Then he looked down at Marta.

"I will hold you carefully," he said. "Shall we not try to take you where they can help you?"

But Marta's eyes had closed, and she was whispering deliriously.

"Hurry," said Hutchinson, "or it will be too late."



CHAPTER XX

"All or nothing, stake it! Trust he God or no?
Thus far and no farther? farther? Be it so!
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses."

BY the next morning, the excitement within the hotel was something beyond description. Indeed, the whole village seemed to be strung to an attention that grew more strenuous with each new event that was brought to their notice.

When Clauda and Wrexford Thorne took Nadine back to the hotel, briefly announcing the burning of Carson, the first to offer sympathy and help had been Mrs. Schultz and her daughter.

"Now, mother," Miss Schultz had said, "we can make up for our snubs and our calling her an adventuress. Miss Murray says she is ill. There must be some way in which we can be of enough use to her to get to know her."

But close on the heels of the burning of Carson, there arrived at the hotel important personages who did everything for Nadine that needed to be done, and who caused breathless interest and excited comment on the hotel veranda and wherever the guests congregated.

gated, even on the corners of the village streets, where they met each other on their shopping errands.

Judge Wallace arrived the next morning with two prominent physicians, one of whom was known to be the head of the Bradport Sanatorium. They were followed by several New York reporters, who, unable to obtain direct information, questioned everybody disposed to talk. On the noon train came Wrexford Thorne's brother, Doctor Carleton Thorne.

The morning papers were vivid with the account of Colin Carson's escape, and his hiding at Carson. The burning of Carson was described and illustrated. Its owner's rescue, his seclusion in the Saranac Hospital, and his subsequent departure under the care of the two physicians, filled the front pages of the afternoon editions.

But not even the reporters, assiduous as they were, were able to explain the woman at the hospital, who had been so seriously injured in the fire, and who was receiving the utmost aid and attention. Carleton Thorne visited her twice on the day that he came, and Judge Wallace had a long interview with her, taking Hutchinson with him.

From the hospital authorities, the newspaper men could learn nothing. Mrs. Carson was in seclusion at the hotel and received only Doctor Thorne. Toward noon of the second day, Judge Wallace, Hutchinson,



and Wrexford Thorne joined Doctor Thorne at the hospital, and were given a private room for consultation.

"These are absolute facts, Mr. Hutchinson?" said Judge Wallace gravely.


"There is no possible doubt of them. The license to marry was issued in my presence. It is true that Mr. Carson did not bear his own name in this license. He was not using his own name that summer, and I think he had no intention of marrying Marta. We none of us knew much about him, and after the marriage Marta disappeared, and we had no way of connecting her husband with this young millionaire. But it was a marriage. I brought him to her house myself, and I was careful to see that everything was straight."

"Then, why on earth," said Carleton Thorne, "did not Harding stick to it, when he claimed a marriage?"

"Harding knew that his career during his handling of the Carson funds was being carefully investigated," said Judge Wallace. "Most of his crooked work was cleverly done, yet he probably had no wish to undertake this new matter without finding out first where he stood. He said himself that there was no use in pressing this matter of a previous marriage until there was a certainty that Carson would not recover his mind. If he were a hopeless lunatic, there

was no chance of divorce. If the woman had had another lawyer, he would doubtless have put it through for her, provided she could have furnished him reasonably good proofs, but it seems that she was allied to Harding in various ways, and he would naturally be the one on whom she would rely. I do not believe Harding himself had faith in her story. It is certain he did not even properly investigate it. If he had, he might possibly have seen that there was more in it. But, for that matter, the rest of us were equally incredulous. I remember, when it was first brought to my attention, shortly before this second marriage of Carson's, I thought it of sufficient importance to warn his fiancée and the relatives with whom she lived. But even I did not suppose that it was anything more than an entanglement that ought to be looked into. When the matter was reopened, and when, instead of going about it in a straightforward manner, Harding made a foolish attempt at blackmail, it is quite natural that I should have supposed there was nothing in his claim for the woman. Blackmail is an ugly and often a difficult thing to meet. The best weapon is a counter-threat, which I used on Harding."

"First and foremost, Harding is for himself," said Wrexford Thorne. "Moreover, he is not a good lawyer, as I understand it. He is merely a clever adventurer. Is it not so?"



"You are quite right," the judge answered. "With the real thing in his hands, he let it slip for lack of patient investigation. It is sheer accident that his claims have been proven true. Only I am sorry that I did not do more investigating myself. It simply did not occur to me that there could be any truth in either Harding or this woman, so I was content to rest on the investigation of some years ago, when the woman withdrew her claims for a pretty large sum of money."

"Harding will probably have to be taken into account, now," said Carleton Thorne grimly.

"That is one of the most disastrous things about it to me," said the judge. "There are unlimited possibilities for mischief there."

"Yet you are a Carson connection, Judge," said the doctor, "and eminently fit to continue in your present position."

"Colin Carson's father, who was a brilliant and hard-working man, and amassed most of this money, was my mother's brother."

"I had forgotten," said Carleton Thorne, thoughtfully, "that the connection was so close."

The judge gave him a quick glance.

"The insanity seems to have been on Colin's mother's side. There were several of them who were queer. Our own stock is quite untainted by it."

"I was not thinking of that," said his son-in-law gravely, "but of — Mrs. Carson's saying that she wanted you in your present position, because you were the only Carson relative left. This is a pretty serious matter for her."

"A week ago," said the judge, "it was the thing she wanted. Yet, now that it has come — I wonder. None of us has seen her, save you, Carleton. What do you think?"

The doctor considered a moment; then looked suddenly into his brother's grave face.

"I do not know. I have seen her only to try to give her some rest and sleep after her harrowing experience. I have not even let Amy stay with her. She needs a little while in which she ought not to think or plan."

"You can not keep it up indefinitely," said the judge.

"Not beyond this morning."

Wrexford Thorne met his brother's eyes very squarely; then he turned toward Hutchinson.

"We are to believe, then," he said, "that there is no shadow of a doubt that this other woman is Colin Carson's wife."

"There is no doubt," Hutchinson reiterated.

"Will it become publicly known at once?" said Wrexford Thorne.

The other three men stared at him. Then the judge spoke.

"I had not thought of that."

"There is a solution," said Hutchinson quickly, "that has escaped you. This could be kept quiet. If enough money is used, there is probably no need of its ever being known. Then Mrs. Carson's reputation would be protected as long as Carson is alive, and at his death, you could probably come to an agreement as to the money. It is not as if she were an impostor. She was married to him in perfect good faith."

"I think she could never be made to believe in such a solution," said Carleton Thorne. "What do you think, Rex?"

Wrexford Thorne pushed back his chair.

"You know what I think, Carl. I think that the sooner she gives it up, the better. I think she is well rid of all this hampering connection with a man who has never brought her anything but distress and despair. I do not think she need lose reputation by permitting the facts to be known. It is nothing she has done herself or that she was in any way responsible for. She has been tricked and cheated, and that is unfortunate, but it is not disgraceful. She was married in one of our own churches, by one of our bishops, with every assistance of law and clergy.

That it was a bigamous marriage ought in no way to affect her position if she leaves it all behind her the moment she learns the facts. I think it is a wonderful solution of a frightful position. I rejoice that it comes to her in the vigor of her youth while her whole life still lies before her."

He paused, and there fell a sudden silence in the room; for there was no possible mistaking the significance of either the man's words or the sound of his voice.

"I put my first question," he finally concluded, "merely because I had heard that this other woman was so dangerously ill that she might not live, and I feared—if she should die—there might be more trouble in establishing the facts of the situation."

"Has she any relatives?" asked the judge of Hutchinson.

"None. That was why I thought, ten years ago, that I was the one to see that this man did the square thing by her. She was young and unprotected, and until I fell ill, she was my promised wife."

"The proofs of her marriage," said the judge, "are a matter of record, since, as Hutchinson says, he himself saw the license issued. Therefore, it can be established whether she is living or dead."

"And what of the town house, that Mrs. Carson has made so beautiful?" asked Carleton Thorne.

"And all her charitable plans; and this convalescent hospital to be made out of the Adirondacks place?"

"If I am left in charge of the estate," said the judge, "none of these plans will be interrupted, nor will their originator ever suffer for the lack of anything that I can give her. Moreover, I recall that there was a settlement made on her. A large sum of money was given to her outright a few days before her marriage. No annulment of the marriage can touch this, if she herself wishes to keep it. You have only to consider, Carleton, what she has done for me, to know that I shall make every effort to spare her, and take advantage of every possible chance in her favor."

"Ah," said Carleton Thorne, "you do not take Mrs. Carson herself into your plans. She is pride itself. She has not realized what it will mean to her to be written up by every newspaper in the country, to be discussed by every idle tongue, to lose even her name, to be subject to insult from those who do not see the matter as we see it —"

"There is another solution," said Wrexford Thorne, with sudden white anger. "I think there is none of you who does not know what it is." He rose. "I am going back to the hotel. And the rest of you?"

"I will go with you," said Hutchinson. "I may be of some use there."

"I must stay here a while," said Carleton Thorne, "to consult with the doctors about this woman. She is dangerously ill. Both lungs are involved, and she has not lived a life that has given her any resisting power."

"I must stay with Carleton," said Judge Wallace, "unless I am needed at the hotel, in which case you can telephone me."

"Carl," said Wrexford Thorne, his hand on the door-knob, "will Mrs. Carson be well enough to see me this afternoon?"

"Yes," answered Carleton Thorne.

The house physician met Wrexford Thorne as he left the room, and spoke with him an instant. Thorne turned and reëntered the room.

"Carl," he said, "Marta is dying. She has asked for a clergyman." He looked at Hutchinson. "Will you not come also? You are her old friend."

A half-hour later, Hutchinson, shaken and white, left the hospital for the hotel.

"I will speak to Claudia about Marta's death," he said, in leaving, "and ask her to tell Mrs. Carson."

The other three men waited to arrange for the final details of Marta's burial, and in each face lay the gravity death brings even to those to whom it is a daily experience.

"You still think," said Carleton Thorne, "that Mrs.

Carson — what shall I call her — that Nadine — will want this woman's history made public? ”

“ I think she will,” said Judge Wallace.

“ How can it best be done? ”

“ One word and these reporters will tell the country.”

The doctor turned to his brother. “ You think this is wise, Rex? ”

“ I think it is right.”

“ It will make a scandal that will hurt her and that can easily be avoided.”

“ How do you propose to avoid it, supposing the scandal will hurt her — and since she has been entirely blameless, I do not think it will with people whose opinion is worth considering.”

“ Hutchinson and Langdon will keep still about it,” said Carleton Thorne. “ The money side of it can be settled without publicity between Nadine and the judge and Amy. The Cressler-Wallaces do not come in, do they? ”

“ No, the relation is through my mother. They are my father's distant cousins,” said Judge Wallace.

“ Well, then, there is only you to consider, even in the event of Carson's death. I should think you were quite good enough a lawyer to arrange the matter with fairness to everybody.” Carleton Thorne paused and gave his brother a quick look. “ And if Nadine

chooses, she can contract a marriage that need not be made public."

Wrexford Thorne made a sharp exclamation.

"For what! Has she not suffered enough? Would you deliberately persuade her to attempt a life of secrecy and pretense? As matters stand now, she has been absolutely honorable. She will continue to be so if she gives up her position and her claims as the wife of Colin Carson the moment that she knows she is not his wife. And what would she gain by following your way? She would avoid a month's notoriety, that, once it is done with, need trouble her no longer. She would retain money that is a burden to her. Such money as she needs to carry out her charitable plans Judge Wallace says will always be at her disposal."

Carleton Thorne shook his head. "Where can she go until this publicity does pass? The country will ring with it. She will be unendurably annoyed."

"She can go just a few miles out of New York; to Miss Jossus' farm," said Wrexford Thorne.

"And when she returns to New York," Carleton Thorne replied, "she will be nameless and declassified."

Wrexford Thorne's grave eyes suddenly caught fire.

"No woman that I love will be besieged or followed or unendurably annoyed. Those who annoy her will answer for it to me. And I think it quite likely that my own name will prevent much that you fear."

"It will cost you your career, Rex."

"If that were true, I would not attempt a career so easily wrecked. My work is useful because of far different things from these puny prejudices you weigh against it. If it were not — if I were forced out of it because of marriage to a woman absolutely good and pure and honest, a woman who has the right to marry me, then it would not be work that I should wish to continue. I should prefer to give it up and to undertake the work of a real man. But you will find that my marriage, not just now, but in a year, or two years, or three years from now, will have absolutely no effect on what you call my career."

Once more the house physician came down the hall. This time he held a yellow envelope.

"It is a telegram for the Reverend Wrexford Thorne," he said. "They sent it first to the hotel and then over here, fearing it was important."

Wrexford Thorne opened it. After he had read it he looked away for some seconds, apparently unconscious of those waiting about him.

"What is it?" said Carleton Thorne sharply.

His brother brought his eyes back to the little group of men.

"It is from the archdeacon," said Wrexford Thorne. "I have been made Bishop of Massachusetts."

even look at Higginham as he approached. It was not until he stopped before her, his bold eyes sweeping her whitened face and shadowed eyes, that she took him into her consciousness.

"I drove over from Lake Placid, this morning," said Higginham, speaking slowly, with an apparent effort to eliminate his lisp. "You did not answer my letter, so I had to try coming in person."

"I think," said Nadine quietly, "that you must realize that I have nothing to say to you."

"What! Nothing to say! When I am keeping so silent for your sake!"

"I do not need your silence," said Nadine sharply.

"Well, your rector does, Mrs. Carson. I will admit that most men meeting another man's wife in this fashion —"

"If you mean me," said Nadine shortly, "I am not another man's wife."

"Ah," said Higginham, "I am not to be fooled by you again. This time I know all about you. Because I do know, and because the morning papers are full of what you have gone through these last few days, I have come to offer you my services again, Mrs. Carson. There is no reason why we should not be friends."

"There is every reason why we can not be friends;

and once more, let me assure you that I am not Mrs. Carson."

Higginham stared at her thoughtfully. "Who, then, is Mrs. Carson!"

"She died a half-hour ago in a Saranac hospital."

"And you!" said Higginham.

"It can not in the least matter to you who I am."

"Yes," said Higginham, "it matters to me. It matters very much. I tried for two months to forget you and it was not a success. Then I saw you with Wrexford Thorne in Boston, and I found you were there surreptitiously. Of course, I knew, then, that it would be only a question of time until you would be — shall we say, more alone than ever —"

The man paused. Before the look in Nadine's face, he found himself unable to complete his sentence.

Nadine made him no answer. As she turned to retrace her steps, Higginham threw a detaining hand across her path.

"And you were not even Carson's wife?" he said. "That is very interesting! I hope you will consider that I, also, have a great deal to offer a woman —"

"Let me pass," said Nadine. Swift footsteps echoed down the path. "Or shall I appeal to whom-ever is coming?"

"You must think this matter over," Higginham be-

gan; then he made a low exclamation, for down the path came Wrexford Thorne.

Thorne took one look at Nadine's face and then his hand shot out toward Higginham's collar.

"Nadine," he said with deadly quiet, "do not wait. Clauda is at the end of the path. She told me you were here. I will stay and finish several little matters I have long wanted to settle with this bully."

Nadine reëntered her rooms at the hotel, her listless indecision banished, and even her doubtfulness put to flight. She had gone out on this walk, despairing over the problem of her seared life and what it might mean to the man she loved if she became a name on every tongue. She scarcely knew what it would mean to herself; and then she had come on Higginham, and realization had overtaken her. This was the thing that Wrexford Thorne would have to fight if he married her. Under the insult of it, her powerlessness had utterly dismayed her. Then, in one white blinding moment, she had looked into Wrexford Thorne's eyes and seen his joy in such a fight. She knew with undeniable conviction that, for ever and always, her burdens must be his, her problems close to his heart, her protection from harm dearer to him than any other task. And suddenly the other things, whose possible effect on him had harassed and worried her, fell back as things of small value.

Nadine looked about the room that she had left in such doubt and distress. Already it seemed a different place to her. She crossed over to her desk and sat down before it again, staring at the telegrams that had come since Carson burned, telegrams that told her her world was watching her. And of what this world would say, she no longer thought.

CHAPTER XXII

“Not time, that sayeth and gainsayeth,
Nor all strong things had severed us then.”

AT Wrexford Thorne's knock, Clauda, with a quick glance at Nadine, crossed the drawing-room to the door.

When she had admitted him, Clauda went out quietly, down the hall to a little up-stairs veranda where she often sat, and where Hutchinson found her a few minutes later.

Thorne stood in the doorway, looking at the drooping figure at the desk, that had not turned, either at his knock or at Clauda's departure.

In the small drawing-room the man looked very tall and very strong.

Nadine stirred under his intent look, and turned. Her eyes met his, and seemed suddenly to waken and to deepen. He crossed the room and stood beside her, looking down at her, then he put a hand over hers as it lay on the desk, held it a moment, and lifting it, uncured its tense fingers and kissed them one after the other, slowly as with unquenchable thirst of her.

As the hand he held trembled beneath his kisses, he let encroaching fingers pass up the arm, bare to the elbow, grave gray eyes on the bent head below him, where even the white neck was flushing at his touch. With one hand still holding the kissed fingers, he stooped and gathered her to him with the other; lifting her from the chair until she faced him and holding her softly and quietly against his heart.

He could feel her trembling grow quieter as he held her, his lips on the bright hair of her bent head, and he slipped his hand about her neck and under her chin and lifted her face until he could look at her.

"I think you have no need to be told how I love you, dear," he said, "beyond all word or thought; beyond all there is in the world. I am starved for you; my life is hunger and thirst without you. I need you, terribly, wonderfully, exultantly. I love you with all I am and know and have."

Wave after wave of crimson swept over Nadine's face, and for an instant the man closed his eyes as if he looked on something deeply sacred. Then he bent over her, his lips on her eyes, her neck, his cheek on hers.

"Nadine, Nadine," he whispered, "I thank God these hideous bonds are cut, and that at last you go free. Do you love me, Nadine — will you marry me? Say it!"


Her voice came very low. "I have always loved you, from the beginning."

"Look at me, and say it."

She raised her eyes, blue and awakened. "I love you," she said.

It seemed the man could not be done looking at what he saw in eyes and lips. Then as her head lay in the circle of his arm, he covered her eyes softly with his hand, held her so a moment, and then he kissed her lips.

THE END





ALICE WHITELEY GLEASON.



